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Building gay clout in California electoral politics

Roberta Achtenberg talks to GCN about her quest to join the California state legislature, San Francisco gay politics, and revolution

By Chris Bull

SAN FRANCISCO — Lesbian lawyer Roberta Achtenberg hopes to become California's first openly gay legislator in what promises to be a hotly contested June election for the state Assembly seat vacated by Mayor-elect Art Agnos.

Achtenberg, directing attorney of the Lesbian Rights Project (LRP), has emerged as the gay community's consensus candidate. She will face popular liberal John Burton in the Democratic primary. Agnos' 16th district seat opened up when, on Dec. 6, he won the San Francisco mayoral election by a landslide, garnering nearly 70 percent of the gay and lesbian vote.

Several community leaders, including San Francisco Supervisor Harry Britt, Black lesbian activist Pat Norman, AIDS Foundation Director Tim Wolfred and congressional aide Steve Morin, considered entering the race, but stepped aside in favor of Achtenberg. According to Gwen Craig, former co-chair of the Harvey Milk Democratic Club, there is considerable enthusiasm for a lesbian candidate. Achtenberg told *GCN* she has a history of "serving the community in a non-partisan manner without asking for anything in return. My own beliefs don't have a place in how we run LRP. People have built up a trust in me." She is a strong community leader who has not made enemies, said Craig.

Achtenberg, 37, is the editor of *Sexual Orientation and The Law*, a 700-page book on discrimination and AIDS issues. She was dean of the progressive New College of Law in San Francisco before joining LRP.

The community is ready to unite again after a series of difficult political battles, Achtenberg said. "We have been battered

lately. I think there is unprecedented support in the community for my candidacy. This will not be a repeat of the divisive races of the last year. People are tired of fighting."

Achtenberg said she hopes to have the support of the same coalition that elected Agnos. She explained that although the San Francisco establishment sided with Supervisor John Molinari in the mayoral race, Agnos was able to form a coalition of gay men and lesbians, progressives, tenants, union members and racial minorities. "Certainly the young leadership in the city is responding to the sense that there is a new power center. They do not necessarily have power or money but they are responding to the crying needs of the people. The test for me is to get my voice heard in this new political order," Achtenberg said.

The 16th district is considered the most liberal in the state. An estimated 20-30 percent of its registered voters are gay or lesbian.

Gay and lesbian candidates still must fight the image that they are "single-issue" candidates, Achtenberg said. The press consistently presents her as "gay activist, Roberta Achtenberg," while Burton is presented as simply "former Congressman John Burton." Achtenberg said that she "is proud to be a lesbian but my candidacy is much more than that." The powerful speaker of the legislature, Willie Brown, a Black man who represents the 17th District in San Francisco, recently said that the gay community lacked more than single-issue candidates. Brown has endorsed Burton for the seat. "Willie Brown should be ashamed of himself. He is basically promoting a prejudice that he is fully aware already exists," Achtenberg said.

Although Burton is the Democratic establishment's candidate, his supporters are "reluctant at best," said Achtenberg.

"I will start out — as a woman and a lesbian — with a lack of credibility. People will condier me an 'abomination.' But they will get over it."

She explained voters want energy focused on solving the problems of San Francisco from new perspectives and hard work, and that many consider Burton a "has-been" in San Francisco politics.

Burton resigned from his second term in Congress to enter a drug rehabilitation program for cocaine addiction. Achtenberg stressed that Burton's drug use would not be



State House under siege

Raucous demo and civil disobedience scream "shame!" at the death of the Mass. gay rights bill

Lesbian activist confronts State House cop

By Elizabeth Pincus

BOSTON — "It's the hottest thing since Washington!" exclaimed participants again and again during a demonstration of outrage and civil disobedience at the Massachusetts State House on January 4. Responding with fury over the Senate's failure to pass the state's gay rights bill, about 400 lesbians, gay men and supporters, organized through MASS ACT OUT, flooded the formal State House halls and disrupted proceedings for several hours. 14 people, including eight who handcuffed themselves to chairs in the Senate viewing gallery, were arrested for trespassing in a planned act of nonviolent civil disobedience that ignited the late afternoon demo.

A stepped up entourage of law enforcement authorities responded varyingly with smugness, silence, hostility and outright violence. Many of the Capitol Police officers making arrests were wearing gloves but not badges, justifying their anonymity on the "near-riot" conditions that could result in badges being used as weapons. In full view of many news cameras, State House officers pushed and slapped protesters causing at least one bloodied lip and a bruised ankle. A video repeated several times on Boston newscasts clearly showed a court officer stomping on the abdomen of a protester as he was dragged out in arrest.

Some protesters are considering suing State House court officers for using unnecessary force, according to their legal representative Katherine Triantafillou. Also under consideration is possible legal action against Senate President William Bulger (D-South Boston) for allegedly violating the civil rights of protesters by allowing court officers to continue violent acts, since he and everyone in the Senate had a full view of the proceedings.

All of the arrested protesters were transported to the Old Colony Metropolitan District Commission station in Dorchester the evening of Jan. 4. Nine of them were released that night on \$15 bail, while five women who refused to cooperate with the booking procedures were held overnight in the Suffolk County Jail. Lesbian activist Jean McCray explained that one reason she chose to stay jailed was to express solidarity with other oppressed people who would have less privilege than she in a similar arrest situation, i.e. people who were not white,

middle-class and employed.

McCray and the other women were released the following morning. At the arraignment that same day at Boston Municipal Court, all 14 pleaded not guilty to trespassing charges and were released on their personal recognizance. The next court date has been set for Feb. 18. Triantafillou said that various strategies are being discussed for arguing the cases.

A fiery rally in support of lesbian/gay rights continued inside the State House after the arrests, while senators and other government workers lingered by watchfully. Several community spokespeople shared a megaphone to loudly lambaste homophobia and the sluggish legislative process that has stymied a Mass. gay rights bill for 15 years. Drawing the rowdiest applause, Boston City Councilor David Scondras praised the protesters for continuing the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. by demonstrating for civil rights.

"I'm proud to be with you today," Scondras said. "We have always taken care of straight society and we demand the respect we deserve... There's no question that the struggle for lesbian and gay rights is for the children — for freeing children from the kinds of people that teach them to hate themselves and others because of their sexuality."

"How dare you discriminate against us?" thundered Scondras. He proceeded to engage in a fist-shaking verbal confrontation with former House Speaker Thomas McGee (D-Lynn) who leaned over a balcony rail screaming, "Gay rights never!" McGee had filed legislation earlier this year proposing an investigation of funding for an explicit safer sex brochure distributed by the AIDS Action Committee.

Also commanding the attention of demonstrators for a brief speech was Arline Isaacson, co-chair of the Mass. Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, who has lobbied extensively inside the State House for passage of the gay rights bill. Isaacson first drew some boos and hisses, apparently in response to her earlier public statements criticizing direct political activism, but she soon swayed much of the crowd with stormy rhetoric.

"I told the senators," Isaacson shouted,

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Calif. State Assembly hopeful Roberta Achtenberg

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Quote of the week

“Martina is like a father to my grandsons. It’s absolutely fantastic the way she plays football and basketball with them.”

— Frances Hill, discussing her daughter’s lover, Martina Navratilova, as quoted in *Australia’s* Outrage magazine.

AZT price lowered

GREENVILLE, NC — Burroughs Wellcome has cut by 20 percent the price of AZT, which is the only AIDS treatment currently licensed by the FDA. The drug previously cost up to \$10,000 a year.

The company has justified the high cost by citing its own substantial development and production costs. According to the New York *Times*, Burroughs Wellcome now reports that it will be able to produce more of the drug at less cost, and that the savings will be passed on to people with AIDS taking the drug.

The price reduction was announced two days before a scheduled meeting to discuss AZT prices with the New York State Consumer Board and Assemblyman Gerrold Nadler (D-Manhattan). The company has previously refused to discuss the price of AZT. After company officials failed to attend an October hearing, Nadler, who is chair of the assembly’s consumer affairs committee, warned that if they failed to justify the price he would issue a subpoena to gain the information.

□ Lori Kenschaft

S.F. meeting ponders the future of lesbian political action

SAN FRANCISCO — Six hundred Bay Area women gathered in November for the first Lesbian Political Action Conference, organized by the group Lesbian Agenda for Action. For two days the women discussed lesbian political priorities, relationships among different forms of discrimination, and ways to ensure that lesbian concerns are reflected in public policy and social change activism.

According to the *Bay Area Reporter*, many of the speakers linked homophobia with other forms of oppression. Donna Hitchens explained: “We know [discrimination] is about some group of people needing to feel superior, and needing to see others as inferiors. We know it’s about some group of people needing to stay in power, economic and personal power. We know it’s about stereotypes.” Pat Norman cited “racism, sexism, classism, and lesbophobia” as “issues that have to be dealt with until they are dead.”

Speakers also addressed what Norman called the “internal obstacles” to change: “Here in a community that demands equality and an end to intolerance, we can, at times, be hardest on each other.” Charlotte Bunch addressed the issue of leadership: “If you want our movement to move forward politically, we have to look much more positively and affirmatively at all the organizers. I hope that we will leave the anti-leadership era of this movement behind.”

Lesbian Agenda for Action will assemble reports on the two-day conference and will hold a general meeting on Jan. 13. For information about the group’s future activities, call (415) 552-5677.

□ Lori Kenschaft

Jackson campaign adds les/gay desk

WASHINGTON, DC — Democratic presidential hopeful Jesse Jackson has established a Gay/Lesbian Desk at his national campaign office here to advise him on lesbian and gay issues. Activist Randy Miller has been hired to head the Desk and will consult with a lesbian and gay steering committee. Some committee members are Andy Humm of New York, Pat Norman of San Francisco and Lee Bush, staff coordinator of the March on Washington.

Miller said his job will include nationwide travel to drum up support for Jackson

within the lesbian/gay community. Miller told an assembly at the Conference of Gay and Lesbian Elected and Appointed Officials held in Minneapolis in November that Jackson is preparing a position paper on lesbian and gay issues. According to Miller, Jackson advocates a presidential order banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in federal and military employment, and is also a proponent of the lesbian/gay anti-discrimination bill now before the U.S. Congress. Miller said the position paper will also support coordinated federal AIDS education and treatment programs that protect civil rights. It will also advocate privacy rights as well as reproductive and domestic partnership rights for lesbians and gay men.

□ Elizabeth Pincus

U.S. to send delegation to Nicaraguan poetry festival

DARIO, NICARAGUA — Poets Sonia Sanchez and Margaret Randall will be among members of the U.S. delegation participating in the annual Ruben Dario Poetry Festival held in Nicaragua beginning Jan. 18. The festival, a three-week celebration consisting of poetry readings, lectures and performances, is named for the Nicaraguan Dario, a world-renowned poet who lived at the turn of the century.

The festival will take place in the town of Dario, located 50 miles from the capital city of Managua. The U.S. delegation is sponsored by the Nicaraguan Cultural Alliance in cooperation with the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers (ASTC). In addition to participation in the festival, the U.S. contingent will visit sites that “contribute to an understanding of Nicaragua and the advances it has made despite the contra war,” according to ASTC organizers.

For further information contact Sue Goodwin at (202) 234-9382 or Brian Karl Lathrop at (215) 963-0503.

□ Elizabeth Pincus

Texas AIDS funding begins

AUSTIN, TX — For the first time, Texas has earmarked state funds to combat AIDS, according to the *Montrose Voice*. Health officials announced last month that \$1.5 million in grants has been allocated for AIDS education and to assist local service organizations in caring for people with AIDS.

State Health Commissioner Robert Bernstein announced that the department received 135 applications requesting more than \$7 million in assistance. Selection of grantees was based, he said, “on the way the applicant dealt with problems and whether we thought they were competent to accomplish those things.”

Bureau of AIDS Control Chief C.E. Alexander added, “We have made every effort to distribute these funds as broadly as possible, especially in the areas of the state where few services exist.”

The largest awards of about \$109,900 each went to the AIDS Foundation Houston and AIDS Services of Austin. The grants will be distributed this month and are renewable after one year.

□ Elizabeth Pincus

LA bars closed in crackdown

LOS ANGELES — Tensions between the police and fire departments and the gay community flared recently over the closing of two popular bars in one weekend because of occupancy-limit violations.

The *Advocate* reports that the furor over the incidents prompted city council member Michael Woo to call for a “complete and independent” investigation into procedures for responding to occupancy-limit violations and the charges of harassment and selective enforcement.

According to eyewitnesses, at least ten police patrol cars, two fire chief cars, and a hook-and-ladder truck gathered outside the One Way bar in response to an anonymous

telephone complaint. “If ten police cars were deployed to a single bar on a Saturday night to enforce an occupancy-limit violation,” says Woo, “it raises serious questions as to whether our police officers are best being utilized.”

Police estimate that there were 286 people in the One Way, which has an occupancy limit of 90.

Officials deny the charges of selective enforcement and harassment. “There were a lot of similar checks going on in the city that night,” explained Police Department Community Relations Coordinator Mark Kroeker. “We didn’t focus on gay bars, although it may have looked like that because of all the attention it got.” Fire Department spokesperson Dean Cathey said “We are enforcing the fire codes...in an equitable manner.... The owners of the Detour and the One Way are not doing their best to insure that their patrons are safe.”

Eric Rofes, executive director of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Center and a patron of One Way the night it was closed, agrees that the occupancy laws should be enforced for the sake of patrons’ safety. “But we’re saying there needs to be fair and equitable treatment of gay business establishments, and I for one don’t think that is happening.”

□ Lori Kenschaft

Twin Cities BWMT disbands

TWIN CITIES, MN — Black and White Men Together/Twin Cities has announced that it is disbanding. *Equal Time* reports that the group’s assets will be given to the Coalition for People of Color/AIDS.

□ Lori Kenschaft

Lesbian cop reinstated

EL PASO, TX — More than a year after being fired for dancing with and kissing another woman, Patricia Minton has regained her job as a police officer. Arbitrator Roberto Albertorio ruled that her actions were “unbecoming a police officer” but that dismissal was an unreasonable response.

Minton was fired in September 1986 after a six-month internal investigation was launched when an undercover police officer observed Minton with her date in a nightclub. Albertorio reduced the sanctions against Minton to 45 days’ suspension without pay, saying that “heavy petting, embracing, kissing and otherwise expressing sexual affection is conduct which arguably undermines the integrity of the police department.” Minton will receive 10.5 months’ back pay.

The *Advocate* quoted Minton’s attorney, Bill Ellis, as saying “This is not a gay rights opinion.... It is an opinion that does not permit the imposition of double moral standards, and it holds all officers to the same amorous contact in public.”

□ Lori Kenschaft

Screening at The Citadel

CHARLESTON, SC — Applicants to The Citadel military school must be tested for HIV, according to *Our Times*. Applicants who test positive will be denied admission, and currently enrolled cadets who test positive will be kicked out.

Dr. Joseph C. Franz, the college’s physician, was quoted in *Our Times* as saying “It’s (the incidence of AIDS at The Citadel) likely to stay very low because of the nature of the students.”

□ Jennie McKnight

Iowa cops don’t need homophobia workshops

DUBUQUE, IA — Police will not attend workshops in sensitivity towards gay men and lesbians because such training would promote homosexuality, the police chief announced last month.

Friends of Lesbians and Gays proposed

the homophobia workshops after a September rally during which they felt the police did not provide adequate protection from homophobic spectators who were throwing eggs.

“We already train our officers extensively in treating people with courtesy and dignity, regardless of color, creed or sexual preference,” Chief John Mauss told the Des Moines *Register*. “I didn’t see anything in this program that would enhance that.” He added that he believed the training would require acceptance of homosexuality.

Mauss also objected that the two-hour session would cost the department \$3000 in wages. When Ginny Lynns pointed out that officers attend paid training sessions on race relations, Mauss argued that the two areas are completely different. “A person is Black and that is what a person is. We don’t give sensitivity training in terms of heterosexuality.”

□ Lori Kenschaft

No more long distance phone sex?

WASHINGTON, DC — An amendment which would prohibit sex-oriented messages over interstate 976 telephone lines was passed by the U.S. Senate in a 98-0 vote. The amendment, which was attached to a comprehensive education bill, was introduced by Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC).

According to *The News*, all the providers of 976 sex-oriented services contacted by the paper refused to comment on the amendment. A spokesperson for Pacific Bell, however, was quoted as saying “The company is in favor of laws or legislation that would keep pornography out of the 976 system.” The phone company is required to be content-neutral in providing service to customers.

If the amendment is passed by the House, it would only affect interstate, not intrastate, phone lines.

□ Lori Kenschaft

“We will be back”

FRESNO, CA — An information booth operated by the Gay and Lesbian Student Alliance at California State University was set ablaze last month. “We lost the booth and a lot of AIDS literature,” said faculty advisor Sari Dworkin. “There was nothing to be saved.”

According to the *Advocate*, the 30-member student group has encountered a lot of resistance since it formed last year. Said Dworkin, “There have been a lot of letters in the college newspaper about how we should not be on campus, how we didn’t have the right to exist, and [how] we are the purveyors of AIDS.”

Despite the clear evidence of arson, group members claim they will not be intimidated from returning to the free speech area on the campus quad. “We have a right to exist on this campus,” Dworkin emphasized. “Right now we have a small bridge table that we are keeping up, and we have our signs out. We will be back.”

□ Lori Kenschaft

Kemp takes homophobic stand on TV

NEW YORK — U.S. Rep. Jack Kemp (R-NY) has spoken out in opposition to lesbian and gay employment rights, according to the Philadelphia *Gay News*. Kemp, a contender for the GOP presidential nomination, reportedly told interviewer David Frost that school boards should have the right to fire homosexual teachers and staff.

PGN reported that Kemp said, “I would suggest that we want all Americans to enjoy civil liberties and the right to privacy, but we have to at the same time recognize that there have to be public standards. I think a school board should have the right to choose what type of example we have for our children in public schools.”

□ Elizabeth Pincus

NEWSNOTES
COMPILED BY
JENNIE MCKNIGHT

AIDS, art and obits

A look at the personal and cultural politics of obituaries and loss in the gay male community

Peter Hujar	1934-1987
Choo San Goh	1948-1987
Gerald Chapman	1950-1987
Barry Laine	1951-1987
Jerry Carlson	1956-1987

By Michael Bronski

I was somewhat distressed several months ago when I was told by a friend that when my name came up in a conversation, someone said, "Oh yes, he's the obit writer for GCN." I consider myself a professional writer, capable of writing almost anything that needs to be written. And when AIDS

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began hitting the gay community harder and harder it seemed obvious that obituaries — of both "known" and "unknown" gay people — needed to be written. But in recent months I have to admit my sense of professionalism has been sorely strained by feelings of depression and inadequacy. Depression because there are so many obits that need to be written; inadequacy because the plain writing of obits was beginning to seem not enough. The litany of names, birth dates, death dates, diseases, lovers left, families left, what they did in their lives, what they did not do, and perhaps most of all, what any of this meant, was becoming unbearable because of its repetition. After a while the writing became sentiment without feeling — an overload of funeral data which repeated death, death, death, but which did not help me, and possibly the readers, to do anything with the facts and what they signified.

In the past three years I have become fairly obsessed with reading obits. I turn to them first when I open a paper. At the beginning of the epidemic AIDS itself was hardly ever mentioned in obits, but you could usually assume the cause of death by the age or the occupation and the ambiguous statements that the person died after a "long illness," or a "short illness." Recently more and more obits admit to AIDS: it is a small comfort of progress. On a good day there may not be any. The worst are when you actually know someone who has died, especially when you have had little or no warning. This happened to me with Gerald Chapman.

Clipping obits from the New York Times or the Boston Globe has almost become rote. They sit on my desk, or on the living room couch as though in some nether world

— no longer part of a newspaper but not yet anything else. Most of the time I mean to use them to write obituaries for GCN; sometimes they just remain there, to be filed away or just serve as a reminder (as if one were needed) that AIDS is a daily part of life.

Many times writing obits is not only depressing, but distressing as well. It used to be reflexive, almost a writing exercise. Now it is impossible not to take it more personally, to see larger patterns, to feel threatened and insecure.

I also feel a sense of loss which, ironically enough, is stronger if the lives I am reading about are not known to me. In mourning the loss of a friend, one is left with the resonance of that friendship. Noting the death of a faceless gay man with only a name and a few facts about his life on newsprint leaves me with a greater sense of loss since there is nothing to connect the obituary to the rest of my life.

These five obits — lives — are of gay men who were prominent in the arts: actors, dancers, directors, producers, artists and photographers. I was only actually friends with one of them, but looking at them all together, typing out the list of names and the dates (one of them born the year before I

Writing this makes me realize how frightened I am — not so much of AIDS and death and all of their attending anxieties, but frightened of what is going to become of gay artists in the next decade.

was, one just a year later) is a painful experience. The pain comes not so much from the *memento mori* factor — although that is present in everything gay men do these days — but from realizing the sense of loss, devastating loss, which accompanies both the listing and the noting of all of these passings. The loss affects both the gay male community and gay male art in the world today.

The Stonewall riots, which heralded the advent of gay liberation, came at a time when many post-war babies were beginning to realize their visions. It was also a time when U.S. culture was breaking out of the narrow social strictures of the 1950s. The arts especially were blooming: off-Broadway, experimental theater, happenings, and new forms of dance and art ex-

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Travel agency scam?

Some irate New Englanders who marched on Washington are still demanding refunds from Innovations in Travel as accusations of fraud against the company surface

By Elizabeth Pincus

BOSTON — A travel agency that made arrangements for thousands of people in the northeast to attend the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights may have been set up by a con artist. The Innovations in Travel Corporation, selected by the Boston March Committee to facilitate economical transportation and accommodation plans, has yet to refund money promised to a substantial number of customers. Other travellers who used the

"The community needs to know if this guy was a fast-talking con artist."

agency claim that Innovations provided bad services and reneged on guarantees. Evidence also suggests that company director Edward T. Heller was convicted two years ago for theft and trafficking of stolen airline tickets.

As anger and suspicion mount against Heller and his company, some gay men and lesbians are demanding that March on Washington organizers acknowledge responsibility for money lost to Innovations in Travel. Prior to the October March, advertisements placed in the lesbian/gay press by the Boston March Committee urged the community to use the services of Innovations. Some people also hold the National March Committee accountable, especially given the recently revealed surplus of \$70,000 in March funds.

Meanwhile, the credibility of Innovations in Travel continues to come under fire. The company's letterhead names offices in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, St. Maarten and London, but the phones for the U.S. offices are all disconnected or go repeatedly unanswered. Calls to Heller's home in New York have also been unanswered for nearly a week. Recent correspondences from Heller to people seeking refunds have deferred responsibility to the National March Committee. In addition, inquiries have revealed that Innovations in Travel offices may never have existed in Boston or at the company's alleged addresses at the World Trade Center and Fifth Avenue in New York.

Joseph Pons, an employee of Heller's who worked for the company during the March in D.C., told GCN that he left his job after the March because of discord on the staff, as well as personal reasons. He declined to comment specifically on Heller. Pons explained that according to his understanding, people who cancelled reservations with Innovations in Travel were entitled to refunds from the company.

Other suspicious circumstances involving Innovations in Travel include the use of

several different business names by Heller and the company's use of boarding passes instead of airline tickets for many travellers. In what is most potentially damning, several sources — including a Florida police officer and a Miami *Herald* article dated Feb. 2, 1985 — claim that Heller was convicted in 1985 for grand theft and trafficking of \$100,000 in stolen airline tickets. He reportedly was released on parole after a plea bargain agreement.

According to a law enforcement officer who requested anonymity, Heller testified against others to gain immunity from prosecution. The officer said he suspects Heller may have subsequently left Florida due to threats on his life. Investigations are currently underway to determine if Heller may be in violation of his parole for operating a travel agency. His parole officer based in Pompano Beach, Florida, refused to comment.

"Heller took our community and used us," said Dan Holmes, the owner of Boston's Downtown Cafe. "I'm tired of gay people getting screwed. Now there's no accountability from [March organizers] who told us to use this company. What the hell kind of gay community do we have when they tell us to go somewhere and then laugh at us?"

According to Holmes, a member of the Boston March Committee laughed and responded flippantly when Holmes sought help in dealing with Innovations in Travel. He said he believes the committee has been unhelpful and evasive about assuming financial responsibility. Another Innovations customer, JoAnn Ribaud, explained that she has been struggling to receive a promised refund for several months. After a series of ambiguous correspondences, Ribaud said she now believes Heller is a con artist. She has been calling March organizers to voice her concerns.

Holmes, who says that Heller's company promised him a refund of about \$270 for two unused hotel reservations, also has made repeated efforts to contact the travel agency and the Boston March Committee since October. After little success and much impatience, he sought legal advice from a friend. The friend, an attorney who asked to remain unnamed for professional reasons, has been delving into the background of Heller and Innovations in Travel for several weeks.

According to her investigation, Heller is a known criminal notorious in travel agent circles for fraudulent activities. In addition to the information about Heller's 1985 conviction for grand theft, she discovered that Innovations in Travel was formally certified as a corporation in New York on Oct. 2,

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Achtenberg

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an issue in the campaign "in light of the fact that lesbians and gays are often the victims of judgments about their personal lives." She said, however, that Burton's "motivation for imposing himself on the race" would be an issue.

"I think we have to fight back. AIDS is the paramount issue in this race. I will pick up where Art left off in pushing important AIDS legislation. I will start out — as a woman and a lesbian — with a lack of credibility. People will consider me an abomination but they will get over it," Achtenberg said.

Several members of the community were less optimistic in their assessment of the race. Britt, who has considerable name recognition, was discouraged from running by several members of the community because of animosity toward him created by his political endorsement swap with Molinari. Molinari had alienated the community by backing the homeporting of the USS Missouri, one of the Navy's largest nuclear battleships, in the San Francisco Bay. The Navy officially discriminates against gay and lesbian enlistees. Britt instead has declared his intention to run for president of the Board of Supervisors, the position currently held by Molinari.

Norman, who has significant support in the Black community as well as the lesbian and gay community, decided to make her third run for the Board of Supervisors instead of aiming for the Assembly. Norman

cited the negative political climate in Sacramento, the state's capital, as another reason not to run. She warned that Achtenberg and the gay community have a difficult fight ahead.

Steve Morin, an aide to U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, who narrowly defeated Britt for the seat last spring, will run only if Burton drops out of the race. Morin has strong ties to the city's Democratic "machine," which he said he believes is in the best position to promote the interests of the lesbian and gay community. Morin told GCN that he and Pelosi

"I know that in the '60s I would never have dreamed of running for office. I would have been called a traitor. But then again I used to think a lot of things — that there would be a revolution — that turned out not to be."

will remain neutral as long as Burton is in the running. Morin predicted that Achtenberg's campaign is a long shot. According to Morin, Burton, who held the 16th District's Assembly seat for ten years before being elected to Congress, already has a strong coalition of labor, progressive and minority supporters. "The problem for Roberta is that on the issues there is little dif-

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Hundreds of angry lesbians and gay men flood the halls of the Mass. State House

Siege

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"that these people, you and me, have every damn right to be here, every damn right to be angry, every damn right to demand our rights! They want us to go away but we won't go away. We are not losing this fight

— we're building something so concrete and powerful. We'll be back again and again and again..."

Isaacson said the gay rights bill has already been reintroduced into the 1988 legislative session which began on Jan. 6. The bill died for the 1987 session on midnight of Jan. 5, after one final motion on the

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GCN welcomes all letters to the editor except personal attacks. Carbon copies of letters sent elsewhere are printed on a space-available basis. The opinions expressed here are those of the author and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN membership. Letters must be TYPED, DOUBLE-SPACED AND NO LONGER THAN THREE PAGES. Send to: Community Voices, GCN, 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

You can use my name

Dear *GCN*:

I am a prisoner in NY state and am receiving GCN. I am also gay and in a special housing unit called APPU for "misfits."

I am writing in reference to a letter printed in Community Voices titled "Asinine policy of supporting prisoners" by a Concerned Lesbian subscriber (Dec.13-19, 1987, Vol.15 No.22)

In the letter she made unnecessary remarks about prisoners as using citizens (gay, lesbian, etc.) as "suckers". How many are doing this? Many? Few? How does she know?

I don't know exactly what she means by "sucker" or if she gets up so much dander about the way that government (military fraud, dismantling legal aid to the poor to help fight for our rights, etc.) and business (food & rent prices) make "suckers" of us all?

Many of us prisoners have not even requested penpals. I read the Community Voices, the Newsnotes, the Centerspread, the articles on AIDS, the fight for rights on "all phases of life", Speaking Out and "Prisoners Seeking Friends." This is very important to me. I don't see how she can call it "asinine."

As for "public defenders", everyone knows these people are being paid half or less of their usual fees for public cases and that "deals" and "plea bargains" are made to speed up the "justice process" and that scare tactics are used on often very uneducated accused people, maybe already with some past record of stealing something. Whether they are adult or adolescent they know that the kind of people found on juries may not be "fair".

It's hard to see how a person can be so hard on persons who are already 'down', without knowing a little more about how the 'system' works. Maybe she and others who have such 'attitude' should have a talk with some public defender about how the 'justice' business *really* operates.

Please use my name,

Dennis Gaggi
85A 2862
Box 367-B
Dannemora, NY 12929

Preface the prisoner project column

Dear *GCN*:

I believe the issues raised by the recent letter concerning the gay prisoner project (December 13-19 issue) deserve some serious thought. First of all, *GCN* does not have an unlimited supply of resources: it seems at least once a month there is a flyer enclosed detailing the paper's delicate balance at the brink of financial collapse and asking for money. It would be a great loss to the gay community if the paper should fold. It seems to me that the energy and funds currently being channeled into the prisoner project would benefit gay people both in and out of prison if directed into ending the AIDS epidemic and resulting discrimination, certainly the most pressing issue facing all of us.

Secondly, the recent "Dominic Perini" drug muggings serve to underscore the fact that, while we are not all "suckers," gay people are perceived as ideal targets for everything from blackmail to murder. If the gay prisoner project is to continue, the very least *GCN* should do is preface the column with a warning. This could also serve as a cover-your-ass type of disclaimer for the paper in the event of a lawsuit.

Name and address withheld by request

ACT-ing OUT

Dear *GCN*:

Once again, the Gay Rights Bill has been defeated by hateful legislators who continue

to attack our community. Yet, we are far from defeat. The October March on Washington showed many of us the power and pride we have. We learned that no longer must we politely ask for our rights; we can demand them. The last decade and a half should have taught us that politeness does not achieve our liberation.

Upon returning from the March on Washington, Mass ACT OUT was born. We seek to publicly challenge homophobia, particularly in light of the AIDS epidemic and many of the proposed "solutions" such as quarantine and tattoos. Public policies such as those, as well as Dukakis' foster care policy (the old myth of gays as child molesters) and the Supreme Court's Hardwick decision, reassert that the battle to define gayness is being fought publicly. Our community must engage in that public battle.

Mass ACT OUT takes pride in the fact that for the first time in the debate over the Gay Rights Bill, public education has taken place in the general population. By being loud and angry and strident, we have spotlighted homophobia so that citizens of this state can no longer ignore such prejudice. The lesbian and gay community has shown that we are at last becoming organized to demand our rights. For the past fourteen years, the Mass. Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus has quietly pursued efforts to pass the bill while restricting our community's participation and visibility with legislators. We believe that for a community to be strong, it must be actively involved in determining its fate. Legislators do not answer to one or two individuals; they answer to their loudest and best organized constituents. And after all, the Gay Rights Bill does not belong to a few of us; it belongs to us all.

That is why many of us were deeply disturbed when the co-chair of the MGLPC publicly chastized Mass ACT OUT for our recent demonstrations at the State House. Arline Isaacson appeared on television and in the Boston *Globe* where she complained to the public that our actions were jeopardizing passage of the bill. In doing so, she ended up undermining our community in a most destructive way.

We recognize that the Lesbian/Gay community is diverse, with a wide range of politics and tactical approaches. While we clearly disagree with the MGLPC over tactics for passing the bill, we do respect their right to use those tactics. A diverse community demands such respect. And we demand the same from leaders of the MGLPC.

Leaders of our community can not be chosen by the straight media, nor can they be self-appointed. They must emerge through their ability to represent the interests of the community in all of its diversity. Isaacson's statements to the press clearly showed her inability to play that role.

The 1988 legislative session will give us another opportunity to pass the Gay Rights Bill. And when passage occurs, it will be a victory for us all. However, it will only be a beginning. Gay Rights Legislation will not end homophobia; it will not even end discrimination. Homophobia and discrimination will disappear when we empower ourselves and our brothers and sisters to demand not just our rights, but a celebration of our lives.

The March on Washington produced unprecedented unity and strength in our community. Mass ACT OUT grew out of the March as a means of continuing the spirit of the March. We will continue to organize and act out, and we will continue to attempt to bring all parts of our community together, reaching beyond traditional barriers of race, class and gender. We urge the MGLPC to do the same.

Sincerely,
Susan Levene
Fred Gorman
Jade McGleughlin
Peter Medoff
Mass ACT OUT

Gay Community News is produced by a collective dedicated to providing coverage of events and news in the interest of gay and lesbian liberation. The collective consists of a paid staff of eleven, a general membership of volunteers, and a board of directors elected by the membership.

Opinions reflected in "editorials" represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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Stauncher Allies

By Tatiana Schreiber

The attitude revealed by "A Concerned Lesbian" (Community Voices, *GCN* Vol 15, No. 22) — that the paper spends too much time and space supporting prisoners — is certainly not unusual. Still, it was a bit of a shock to see it so blatantly revealed in these pages. I know I shouldn't be surprised, though, because a less extreme form of that attitude is displayed everyday by my close friends and associates who say that prison issues are "low on my list of priorities," or argue that sending books to prisoners "isn't political."

Those of us who spent nine months of labor birthing the Lesbian Prisoner Supplement spent much of that time attempting to understand and respond to these ideas on the part of our own lesbian and gay community members. Obviously, we failed to persuade "Concerned"; she seems to have made up her mind. But I'm going to make another attempt today just in case she really does speak for "many other gay people who are tired of seeing letters bitching about how terrible prison is."

About ninety unconvicted women at any given time are being housed, four to a cell, in cells designed for one person, twenty-three hours a day.

"Concerned" refers only to *men* in jail. Perhaps she doesn't know that over four hundred women are in prison in Massachusetts. Since I know more about the situation for women prisoners than for men, I'll speak mostly about women. The number of women in prison keeps going up, tripling between 1980 and 1985. Contrary to "Concerned's" statement that everyone in prison or jail "has been tried and found guilty," 20 percent of the women in MCI-Framingham are *awaiting trial*. These women are held in prison because they are unable to make bail. Since they haven't been "classified" in terms of security, they are held in maximum security cells.

What this means is that about ninety unconvicted women at any given time are being housed, four to a cell, in solitary cells designed for one person, and locked in these cells twenty-three hours a day. Some remain in the Awaiting Trial Unit for literally years, deprived of access to what limited programs and activities exist. Across the country some 50-75 percent of all prisoners are awaiting trial — innocent before the law.

It's true, however, that most of those actually convicted of a crime *are* guilty of that crime. In talking to about twenty prisoners and ex-prisoners over the last three years not one has claimed she was innocent of her crime. These crimes are predominantly "property" or "victimless" crimes like writing a bad check, stealing or possessing drugs. Some women *do* commit violent crimes, like stabbing or even killing an abusive spouse. But whatever the crime,

In many state prisons all physical contact between women is a crime punishable by solitary confinement. Women are given disciplinary tickets for lending an item of clothing or combing someone's hair.

women are serving time in prison — separated from their children (and often losing custody of them), separated from family and friends and deprived of all control over their own lives.

One would think that deprivation of liberty was punishment enough for having committed a crime. But once in prison women are subjected to a myriad of dehumanizing rules and regulations concerning what they can wear, what they can read, when and where they can walk, who can visit them,

which other prisoners they can associate with. In many state prisons all physical contact between women (like putting an arm across someone's shoulder) is a crime punishable by solitary confinement. Women are given disciplinary tickets for lending an item of clothing or combing someone's hair.

And these are minor indignities compared to what confronts women who are ill, or happen to be pregnant when they are imprisoned. Pregnant women in Massachusetts are taken to the hospital in handcuffs, watched at all times by guards. After delivery they are separated from their babies

Why isn't "Concerned" dismayed at all the rich people who will never see the inside of a jail because they have the resources to protect themselves from the injustices of the criminal justice system?

in forty-eight hours, handcuffed and returned to prison.

Advocates for prisoners are *expected* to complain about prison conditions, but just a few weeks ago I was surprised when a high-level prison administrator, the "Director of Treatment" at MCI-Lancaster (a pre-release facility for women and men) told me that women at Framingham were so devastated by the trauma of surviving the prison experience that no rehabilitation could be expected to take place.

Yet 98 percent of all prisoners in the U.S. are eventually released from prison. They are released after an experience that leaves them bitter, hostile, fearful of the world, and usually with no more skills and *fewer* resources than they had when they went in. It's amazing to me that any women *do* manage to stay out once they are released. Finding a decent-paying job, fighting to regain custody of their children, getting an apartment, coping with the stigma of being an "ex-con" and dealing with attitudes like that of "Concerned," make it nearly impossible. So many return to prison again and again.

"Concerned" says she's tired of prisoners "crying poverty." It's true that most people in prison are poor. Those poor people who aren't in prison at the moment are the lucky ones. But why isn't "Concerned" dismayed at all the rich people who will never see the inside of a jail because they have the resources, the education and the connections to protect themselves from the injustices of the criminal justice system? Or does she think that rich people don't commit crimes?

I do agree with "Concerned" that we should give space in *GCN* to the victims of violent crime. In many years of reading *GCN* I've noticed considerable coverage of gay-bashing, discrimination, sexual abuse, and the crimes of our legislators who have still failed to insist that protection from discrimination against us needs to be written into law.

Perhaps I haven't convinced "Concerned," but I hope the rest of my community can understand that we cannot fail to also give space to the people who really *are* victimized by the inhumane and arbitrary (or deliberately discriminatory) workings of the prison system. We cannot write off prisoners as if they somehow had nothing to do with our own lives. I hope very few of us ever face incarceration, but those who are immune from that possibility are a smaller number every day. Our sexuality is illegal in this state. Our economic resources (particularly for lesbians and lesbians of color) stretch less far every day. Homelessness and the fear of homelessness are realities for many of us.

We cannot afford to separate ourselves from prisoners. I, for one, figure I'm going to need all the friends I can get in the coming years, and women surviving imprisonment will undoubtedly make stauncher allies in this world than "concerned" lesbians who hold themselves aloof from real life.

Tatiana Schreiber is a freelance radio producer currently working on a documentary about women in prison that will air this spring as part of International Women's Day on WMBR, Cambridge.

Coming Out: Daily Activism

By Rex Wockner

When you're all tangled up in fighting for your rights, the gay movement can often seem like a complex matter, but perhaps it really has nothing to do with marches, parades, protests, bar raids, lobbying, AIDS funding or sex. Consider these simple points: Everyone knows someone who is gay; most people, however, don't *know* they know someone who is gay; if they did, however, it might signal the beginning of the end of their homophobia.

For example, Jerry Falwell has gay people working in his TV studio, but he doesn't know it. Ronald Reagan has gay people somewhere in his family. Does he know it? Gay law clerks probably work for the justices of the Supreme Court, but the justices don't know it. And, the neighbors you protect from public displays of affection have gay cousins, but they don't know it.

Meanwhile, all these people who don't *know* they know any gay people watch TV. They're tuned in in June when TV crews head off to gay pride parades. They're tuned into the news when some male mass murderer just happens to have carved up little *boys*. And, they're glued to the tube when persons with AIDS go on *Donahue* and talk about how bathhouses were their *raison d'etre*. (There is, of course, nothing wrong with being a drag queen or with having discovered the meaning of life in a back room. I'm one of those gay men who believes we all need to stick together, and that NAMBLA — the man-boy love group — *should* have been allowed in the L.A. pride parade).

My point is simply that people who don't *know* they know any gay people have a way of thinking of us in distorted, media-reinforced categories. "You don't act gay," a friend once said to me when I came out to her.

What happens, on the other hand, when people *do* know someone or several people who are gay? My experience is that they begin to challenge their stereotypes. "Jalane" is a secretary at my office. About a year after I began my job, she asked me if I was gay. "Yes," I said. A month of standard questions followed: "Do you think

Jalane's questions were appropriate because they were exactly what I might have asked if I'd been 28 and never known I'd known any gay people.

you'll miss not having kids? What do you really do in bed and how does it work and does it hurt and who does what to whom and what about AIDS and...?"

Jalane, like everyone, deserved answers. "Yes, my partners and I are concerned about AIDS, so we have safer sex; not all of us have taken the antibody test because it's not a good test.... Yes, we do put our penises in each other's anuses and no it doesn't hurt and, in fact, I feel sorry for heterosexual men who never get to experience it.... Maybe I *will* have a kid someday; some lesbians once expressed an interest in my sperm.... No I haven't done drag, yes, I have been to bathhouses, about ten times. No, I haven't slept with a thousand people, but I have slept with twenty and fooled around a little bit with perhaps another forty. And, no, your questions aren't stupid."

I felt Jalane's questions were appropriate because they were exactly what I might have asked if I'd been 28 and never *known* I'd known any gay people.

All this happened only a year ago. By last week, however, Jalane's world had become a different place. At a family gathering, her brother-in-law began ranting about the fags. She interrupted him, she told me, rebuked him and ended the conversation. He was no longer attacking mythical fag abstractions, you see. Instead, he was attacking her friend and saying things she knew were not true about her friend.

Jalane may be an extraordinary person, but, if so, it doesn't reveal itself elsewhere. She's a secretary with a high school educa-

tion and has told me point-blank that her goals are a house in the suburbs, a big screen TV and some well-provided-for kids. For our purposes, the only thing that separates her from the secretary at the next desk is an enlightened attitude about gays — because she knows one.

A simple way to be part of the gay rights movement is coming out everyday, one-on-one. Once people find out how many gay people they already know, they almost have no choice but to let go of many of their preconceptions. They may not make it as far as Jalane, who stays after work and helps me fold and stuff our local gay newsletter, but at least they'll rethink such profundities as "All fags should be locked up." (Seven percent of the university students in Illinois recently agreed with that statement in an anonymous survey.)

The rest of the office eventually figured out my sexual orientation (around the time I was getting drafted as an AIDS project spokesperson in the local media) and it seemed to continue to be a non-issue. Gerry Studs once said that his colleagues in Congress really don't mind that he's gay. "It's a back-slapping, good old boy atmosphere," he said. "I'd know if they were bothered."

My experience reveals the same thing. People who find out they already know some gay people tend to be less anti-gay than people who don't know any gay people. Is not, then, the secret for us all to become "activists" in the midst of our daily routines? What more fundamental contribution to the movement can we make?

Rex Wockner is an Illinois-based activist and free-lance writer. His writing appears regularly in Chicago Outlines.

"Speaking Out" is part of our continuing effort to provide a true forum of opinion for the community. We encourage you to send your ideas, feelings and comments to us, and to respond to ideas expressed in this space. The opinions expressed are those of the author and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN membership. Submissions must be TYPED, DOUBLE-SPACED, AND NO LONGER THAN FIVE PAGES. Send to: Speaking Out, GCN, 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi

Despite strong performances, the Alley's production of Pam Gems' feminist play disappoints

Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi. By Pam Gems. Directed by Elizabeth Appleby. With Jacqueline Grad, Tazra Dolan, Eileen Sullivan, and Adele Hars. At the Alley Theatre, 1253 Cambridge, St, Cambridge. Through January 16.

By Mara Math

Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi is a four-woman work by British playwright Pam Gems. On that ground alone, it is indeed "a welcome change from the usual saccharine Christmas offerings" as the Alley's publicity promises. However, Gems' selection of characters, four women sharing a flat, feels less like diversity than obligatory class representation: upper-class political organizer Fish, middle-class housewife Dusa, working-class hospital attendant/call girl Stas and anorexic young Vi. And the play feels scattered because for the first half of the scenelets, the characters are not talking to each other but at each other.

Elizabeth Appleby's direction further undercuts the play. She makes Vi a cute "waif" and has Jacqueline Grad play her feminism for laughs rather than as one of the unconscious motivations for her anorexia. Under Appleby's direction, Stas' reactionary politics come across as the most sen-

theatre

sible philosophy of those espoused, surely not what radical feminist Gems intended (and possibly not what Appleby herself intended since she bravely advertised the play as feminist).

Fish's gradual breakdown after her lover/comrade Allan dumps her for a giggly young thing becomes a kind of British *Splendor in the Grass*, a personal flaw rather than a radical idealist's inability to cope with stunning personal injustice. Her expressions of intertwined political and personal protest against Allan's sexist cruelty come too late — in her suicide note. Those women who have accommodated the status quo, Dusa and Stas, end up the happiest — but the play does not rouse the audience to outrage over this turn of events.

The performances are all strong, with the exception of the occasionally wavering accents. Tazra Dolan's brittleness works for her in this case, although she doesn't look nearly dumpy enough for the discarded wife who has "let herself go." Eileen Sullivan is best in the rapturous moment when she describes her reconciliation with Allan; Adele Hars is completely believable as Stas, tricking to earn her money for a degree in Marine Biology; and Grad creates a very appealing Vi. □

Travel scam

Continued from page 3

1987, barely a week before the March. She also reported that Heller is not registered as a travel agent with the Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC), a Washington, D.C. consumer group which oversees ticketing operations for almost all credible agencies. Bill Jackman, spokesperson for the ARC, confirmed that Heller is not an approved travel agent and is known at ARC for allegedly attempting to sell airline tickets stolen from ARC-approved agents.

The investigating attorney described Heller as "clearly a con man who's been around for a long time." She said she believes a gross error was made by March organizers in neglecting to check the background of an agency they chose for business transactions. Expressing pessimism that any money will be recovered from Heller and his agency, she said she still hopes to assist individuals in drafting complaints. Further, she explained that since last speaking with Heller on Jan. 4, she thinks he may have gone underground due to increasing public and media attention regarding his activities. She explained that little evidence may exist to prove new crimes have been committed by Heller, though New York

not be legally liable for lost money. However, Ault expressed concern about the situation and support for further inquiry. He declined to specify if March funds would be considered to cover losses; a nation-wide steering committee of organizers is currently considering how to disburse the \$70,000 surplus.

Leslie Cagan, coordinator for New York's March organizers, said she has fielded some complaints from travellers who lost money to Innovations in Travel. She explained that the New York committee only used Heller's services for bus transportation and has had difficulty in receiving financial reports from him. But she said she was unaware of any allegations involving criminal activities.

According to Susan Trotz, a transportation organizer from the Boston March Committee, Innovations in Travel was chosen from among several agencies because it seemed the best of the options. She said she was unsure how much checking had been done into the company's background. Trotz explained that a private travel agency was used precisely to avoid a situation that would result in financial responsibility falling to the March Committees.

Nancy Wechsler, another March organizer from Boston, said that if it were done over, she believes an outside business would not be used for travel services. She acknowledged numerous problems that arose before and during the March from sloppy work on behalf of Innovations in Travel, but she said she is unsure who should be responsible for lost money.

As GCN goes to press, several people in Boston are discussing possibilities for seeking retribution from Innovations in Travel. Specific information about planning meetings or contact people is not yet available. However, one suggestion for pursuing inquiry into the activities of Innovations in Travel is to contact the New York City Consumer Fraud Affairs Division at (212) 587-4908. □

...inquiries have revealed that Innovations in Travel offices may never have existed in Boston or at the company's alleged addresses at the World Trade Center and Fifth Avenue in New York.

police and possibly federal agents are investigating his whereabouts.

Meanwhile, organizers for the March on Washington from Boston and New York have expressed uncertainty about current relations with Innovations in Travel. Some said they have been unaware of the growing controversy surrounding Heller, and do not know of any plans to assume responsibility for financial losses. Others explained that in light of the unfolding scandal, further investigation should be undertaken by March organizers.

"The community needs to know if this guy was a fast-talking con artist," said Steve Ault, co-chair of the National March Committee. "I'm as curious as anybody else. If that's the case, people knowledgeable about the travel business were misled. It was not a slipshod or casual business relationship that developed between March organizers and [Innovations in Travel]."

Ault stated his belief that if the local and national March Committees were given erroneous information by Heller and if fraud was perpetrated, then the committees would

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S I E S T A

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GABRIEL BYRNE

JULIAN SANDS

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI

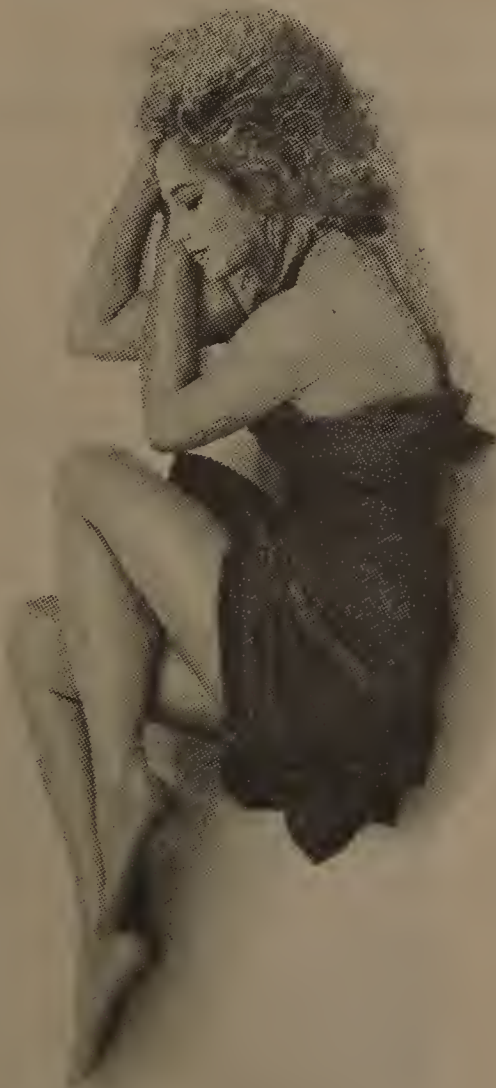
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Housekeeping gone amok

A spare saga of untamed loneliness

Housekeeping. Directed by Bill Forsyth. With Christine Lahti, Andrea Burchill and Sara Walker. At the Nickelodeon-USA Cinema.

By Elizabeth Pincus

Housekeeping is a fragile wonder of a movie. With extraordinary grace, the film wanders between sadness, delight and repose, evoking a full range of emotion about living life on the edge. Marginal people are championed without being romanticized; pain is acknowledged without being psychoanalyzed. *Housekeeping* portrays a subtle sense of "family" gone awry, with no attempt to posit a solution. It pretends no utopia, it demands no conformity.

The film offers a healthy dose of relief from the recent spate of Hollywood morality tales warning women to get and keep a grip on their nuclear families.

Housekeeping laughs off that myth. It is everything that *Fatal Attraction* is not — a tale about craziness, a peculiarly female kind, unconcerned with men or consumerism or propriety. Still, the women in *Housekeeping* experience the sorrows of aloneness and the yearning to connect with others. I can't recall characters in fiction or film more mindful of belonging (or not belonging) since Frankie in Carson McCuller's novel, *Member of the Wedding*.

Bill Forsyth directed *Housekeeping* (based on a novel by Marilynne Robinson) with a jaundiced humor akin to his earlier films *Gregory's Girl* and *Local Hero*. Again, he slyly lends dignity to the slightly offbeat. Perhaps Forsyth's position as a contemporary Scottish director allowed him a sage outsider's interpretation of this tale about misfits set in Northern Idaho in the 1950s. Though seemingly a simple story, *Housekeeping* presents layers of emotional depth and stunningly lucid symbolism.

Two adolescent sisters, Ruthie and Lucille, come under the care of their Aunt Sylvie. She is a quirky woman prone to hopping freight trains and drifting from job to job. The sisters have never experienced consistent adult companionship: following their mother's suicide, they lived with their grandmother, then two great-aunts before Sylvie came along. Perhaps the least tethered of all, she presents a puzzling model of adulthood for Ruthie and Lucille.

Still, Sylvie is refreshingly unconventional and brings them clues about their mysterious family past. The nieces are first enchanted with their aunt's casual, sometimes moody presence and her apparent indifference to ordinary living. Ruthie and Lucille note Sylvie's quiet strangeness and soon begin to feel almost annoyed at their freedom to do as they please, without comment from their aunt. Playing hookey from school for days on end, they experience a "giddy but heavy-hearted pleasure" at Sylvie's indifference; then they start longing to be caught. For the young sisters, already perceived by townspeople as products of a disaster-ridden family, living with Aunt Sylvie casts even further oddity into their lives.

Lucille, played by Andrea Burchill, starts resenting the instability and tries to conform to town standards of young womanhood. Sara Walker as Ruthie responds by withdrawing into gawky silences, and by nearly emulating Aunt Sylvie's lone style of wandering. The sisters begin a sad estrangement while Sylvie, elegantly underplayed by Christine Lahti, acknowledges them watchfully yet maintains her remove. Throughout *Housekeeping*, the main characters are always skating on delicate ice, never quite sure of their shifting relationships nor entirely aware of each other's motives.

The beauty of the movie lies in its depiction of fragility, both physical and emotional. Set in the fictional mountain town of Fingerbone, the natural landscape is cold, wet and foreboding. The lake presents an omnipotent danger — it claimed the lives of the mother and grandfather of Ruthie and Lucille, along with numerous other townsfolk. Nonetheless, the sisters and their aunt gravitate often to the lake. It seems to represent a spiritual center and symbolizes both escape and death. The mortal safety of Ruthie, Lucille and Sylvie is always uncertain in *Housekeeping*.

Attempts to ensure order are also portrayed as pointless, with the threat of

natural disaster or disturbances of the heart ever hovering. The world is askew in Fingerbone; even the town name evokes a spare, near macabre sense of doom. Amidst all this uncertainty, Aunt Sylvie projects a brave elan and her own pack-rat style of keeping house. But she remains uninvested in security, ever ready to move on.

Housekeeping refrains from overtly judging Sylvie, and though enigmatic, she conveys wisdom, not foolishness. Ruthie and Lucille, forced into early self-sufficiency, are also presented uncritically, though their shifting roles are used to spotlight the pressures of conformity. Lucille willingly adopts town standards of convention, whereas Ruthie — in a heartbreakingly funny sequence — tries assuming a respectable pose so she won't be separated from Sylvie. Together they iron clothes, straighten their hair, stay in from the cold, even pretend to eschew provocative reading — all masquerades of taming womanhood. But as in the rest of *Housekeeping*, orderliness is a delusion for these spirited women. The moorings slip even further at the film's haunting close.

Unfolding as a memoir from Ruthie's point of view as narrator, the film feels self-conscious in its strangeness. But with crafty nonchalance it also portrays unusual behavior as fully rational — the enormous stacks of newspapers collected by Sylvie seem entirely in place in their kept/unkept house. Lunaey is an arbitrary distinction. Danger, too, feels random from the first shaky moment in *Housekeeping* when Ruthie and Lucille's mother lets their car drift across the center lane in front of an oncoming truck. From the outset, Ruthie wonders how much of the story she narrates is "real memory" versus imagination. It's a fine point to ponder amidst this film of elusive truths. □

Siesta a snooze

Siesta. Directed by Mary Lambert. With Ellen Barkin and Jodie Foster. At the Nickelodeon-USA Cinema.

By Elizabeth Pincus

Fans of Ellen Barkin will not be impressed with her talents in *Siesta*, the first feature film by director Mary Lambert (of Madonna music video fame). Not that it's Barkin's fault, per se, through why such a stunning performer agreed to traipse mindlessly through this utterly

laughable movie remains as mysterious as the plot. (Which ostensibly involves

risk, passion and murder in oh-so-ethnically interesting Spain.) However, fans of Jodie Foster may want to tune in for a view anyway. She absolutely steals the screen with a vampy bit part as a gold-digging socialite. The hotel room seduction scene between Foster and Barkin is unfortunately not quite worth the admission price, since the come-on gets interrupted and the story line in *Siesta* is too hokey to even pass as camp. Well, *maybe* it's worth it.... □

In the late '60s and early to mid-'70s, activists like George Jackson and Eldridge Cleaver got political schooling in prison. Even many well-educated middle-class people did a little time for their civil rights work, anti-war protests or experimentation with drugs. The concrete prison experience of many agitators and the prevailing radical critique of social institutions made prison issues a concern of the Left. Now, in the late '80s, prison activism and knowledge of the

criminal justice system stand at perhaps an all-time low. Cutbacks in government aid to poor people have ensured that more and more people will go to prison for economic crimes. At the same time, the Reagan administration's attack on subsidized legal aid has made it even more difficult for those charged with "crimes" to defend themselves and keep their freedom. The opportunistic war on drugs — a campaign to catch the small-time dealers on the street rather than the kingpins who will buy their way out in any case — further increases the number of prisoners without resources or political influence. And AIDS continues to be used by prison systems as an excuse for greater abuses inside — particularly against gay people and drug users.

What this all adds up to is a hard time for doing prison work. And for most of us, it's difficult to get to the point of considering such work because we have very little information about what prisons are really up to and how the system works. The common

myths about prison life — bolstered by the media and popular culture — paint hazy pictures for us of bars, numbered gray jumpsuits and burly guards. And the system itself keeps a tight lid on public information; it is, for example, virtually impossible to get a fiscal breakdown of prison budgets. We don't know how much they spend on education programs, on job training, etc. They don't want us to know.

What they do want us to continue believing is that the "bad guys" go to jail, if you can only catch them and they don't elude the "good guys" on an irrelevant technicality. That the majority of prisoners are violent and that prisons are the only way to keep us safe from the mad dogs out there who want to hurt us. Most of us have sympathies for people like Virginia LaLonde, who recently did time in Massachusetts for refusing to disclose the whereabouts of her daughter who she believed had been sexually abused by the girl's father. And we probably don't believe battered women who kill their

boyfriends or husbands in self-defense deserve to get locked up. But still, when we hear a convicted rapist escaped from a prison near our home, we want him put back; prisons can seem comforting and necessary.

What our fears and the dictates of social control don't often let us see is that a tiny fraction — maybe 10-20 percent at most — of prisoners are in for violent crimes. Most are there because they're poor and they tried — in one way or another — to survive. Our very political community, active in so many arenas, on so many issues, remains strangely unperturbed by the criminal justice system. If we think about daily life in a cage at all, we generally believe it's not that bad. They *must* have programs, prisoners are *relatively* well, and they don't have to be responsible for their lives — something my grandmother recently told me in a conversation about her disabled sister who lives in a state rest home. The majority of people in my large tightly-knit and well-off family cannot *bear*, they say, to visit my aunt. But what they really mean is they don't want to see so they don't have to worry and won't have to act.

The two letters below from a prisoner in Nevada expose some of the problems of the criminal justice system, especially the arbitrary nature and unlimited power of the officials who rule pri-

"Come on! Get

October 31, 1987

Dear GCN,

I am a 21-year-old woman being held in an isolation cell at the Nevada "Corruption Center," under the care of our illustrious warden, Brenda Burns. I am doing 90 days isolation for a so-called escape. That alone should give you an idea of what is going on. NOBODY who truly escapes receives that mild of a segregation sentence. I feel I received this amount of time because the warden was pushing the [disciplinary] committee for a finding of guilt to support the media reports made after the whole incident was over. I have also been referred to the director of Nevada Dept. of Prisons for forfeiture of statutory good time. [Prisoners are usually given variable length sentences — they get "good time," i.e. are allowed to leave before the maximum possible sentence if they play more or less by the rules of the game.] If he approves it, I could end up doing more time in prison because of these false accusations.

I guess I need to clarify how I am not guilty of this so-called escape. I had been placed at a "Restitution Center" in Reno, Nevada. At this program, you work on the streets at a regular job and return to the center when your shift is over. While at work, you are allowed to leave your work site to eat, as long as you stay within a half-mile radius of where you work. I left my job for one hour and five minutes and stayed within the half-mile radius. I then called the center and asked them for a pick-up. Apparently, a security officer at my job site, who wasn't aware of my privileges, called the center when I left, and told the center I had "walked away" (considered escape). So when the center picked me up, they took me to the center instead of taking me back to work.

I would also like to note that this security officer, who hates gays, accused me of having "sexual aggregations" with a woman who worked at the place I worked for. This is not true — we were strictly friends and our relationship was platonic. We had no contact other than on a business level, at work. This accusation threatens her job, her family and personal life, our friendship, and also played very negatively at my disciplinary hearing because the captain here has the worst case of homophobia I've ever seen. He especially has a problem with young lesbians — he assumes we are "prison turn-outs" [aren't really queer, but are sleeping with women while in prison]. (I have been at it since I was 15, but he refuses to accept this as I was bi until three years ago.)

Throughout the duration of this, the prison has violated almost every procedure and guideline in the book THEY wrote applying to matters such as this. They have denied me every form of relief available in the prison system here (even though the



Tanya Temen

points I have raised are inarguable and in writing in the Code of Penal Discipline). Most seriously and importantly, they constantly deny me access to the materials, information, contacts and assistance I need not only to fight this, but also to prepare a Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus. This is against my constitutional right concerning access to the courts. They are fully aware of this, but continue to do it anyway.

I am still trying to prepare the Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus for filing. I will soon have legally EXPIRED this sentence, but they have no intention of releasing me then and are quelling my attempts to seek assistance and relief through the court system.

They also insured that I would be denied parole in August of this year by submitting a "Board Report" to the parole board that was full of false and misleading information. When I questioned parts of it, I was told "Take it up when you see the board." They didn't change a single word of it even though it was, point blank, bullshit. Obviously, the board read the report before they ever saw my face and when I tried to defend myself they made me look like an idiot. I mean, how can you go in and give your side when they have a report in front of them that says you're nothing but a perpetual problem. (I have this bad habit, better yet, the audacity to throw a wrench in their machine every chance I get by writing grievances and contacting the press.) My habit of writing grievances wasn't discussed specifically; they use other words for it — "troublemaker" heads the list.

I'd like to know how they can call fighting their homophobic oppression "troublemaking." I'm not screwing their daughter! I'm surely not interested in screwing them in a literal sense — however I choose to make

love with is strictly my business. And until the day I cause them problems, other than those they create in their minds, they can stay out of it.

Thank you,
Liesl Hale

P.S. I would really like to receive a subscription to GCN of my own. While I was in population I read someone else's copy, but now that I'm in the rack [isolation] I don't have access to population as far as passing things, so I'm cut off. I really miss GCN. I have gained much knowledge of what's going on "out there" from it, and contacts with other publications and organizations. It's also a lifesaver to know the community is alive and strong.



Rachel Burger

Dear GCN,

Since I last wrote to you the situation here has heated up considerably. Per a live interview yesterday with a local radio station here in Carson City, I managed, in less than ten minutes, to address a good quantity of the problems Nevada inmates face. My primary point was the game of cover-up our Depart-

ment of Prisons director, warden and the Carson City Sheriff's Dept. play. I opened up their little closets of horror, and through inarguable statements of fact, shot their credibility straight down the drain. Needless to say, I definitely pissed a few people off (the warden heard the whole thing from start to stop). I served my purpose, though; a large number of people in the community put another piece in their puzzle of understanding the prison system and now they want answers.

Now I would like to send a message out to all my brothers and sisters in prison, especially those in Nevada:

By being part of "us," I am personally aware of the problems we face, and more seriously, how much these problems are lied about, covered-up, ignored and put-off. We don't have a chance in hell of having anyone help us help ourselves if we don't open up and let our voices be heard and our problems brought out in the open. It's up to us, no one can help if they don't see us, hear us, and most of all, realize that we won't go away. We need to let people know that the prison system is a farce, that rehabilitation is a term used by people who haven't walked our paths, and that we aren't just "those criminals." We are people, individuals, HUMAN BEINGS!

We need to publicize the issues prison officials and legislators hide. I'm talking about:

- 1) building fences instead of alternatives
- 2) misappropriating money
- 3) the lack of programs inside the fence that address our needs
- 4) the lack of educational programs that will help us once released, not just pacify us while we're here
- 5) the violations of the few civil rights we have left
- 6) the incompetency of the guards and every other type of prison employee

Come on! Get off your butts! Do you like this shit? Do you want to spend the rest of your lives here? Have they torn you so far apart that you can be complacent and apathetic when someone is taking the proverbial piss in your Post Toasties? These six things are only the tip of the iceberg. These fucks run your lives, they tell you when to eat, sleep, and shit — not to mention who, where, when, and how you have sex!

Best homes can get away with unspeakable crimes, but prisons where we put people we often believe deserve to be punished, get away with so much more. The rules out here — such as they are — just don't apply inside where nobody can see but the prisoners. One blatant example comes to us from the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolishes slavery, except in prisons. "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted[emphasis added], shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction." These words get more and more true as prison conditions move to take over prison — institutions that daily become more and more "big business." Prisoners are routinely forced to work — sometimes for pennies a day — not for restitution to people they stole from, but as money-making for state and/or private coffers. If they don't work, they face retaliation from guards. They can be put in isolation and/or lose the maximum time for their crimes. Leslie Hale notes in her letters, prison is allowed to routinely take away 72 hours from a person's life in retaliation — not allowing the same. Similarly, those who are gay can be denied participation in recreational programs, etc. — education, medical care, etc. — but a privilege doled out only to the straight.

While Liesl urges prisoners to take responsibility for what happens to them, to unite against the system's urging that people inside compete with each other for crumbs, the fact is that we as a community allow the abuses to continue. We allow class to be the arbiter of who gets punished for "crimes." We allow poverty itself to be considered a "crime." And once people get locked up, we leave it to the experts to decide what happens to whom.

The myth of prisons as safekeeping for society has to be blown apart. What makes people write bad checks and steal cars? The bigger problems of race and class — of exploitation generally — don't go away because you hide people who insist on living despite exploitation. Even the problem of violence — against women, gay people, people of color — doesn't go away because you trap a few perpetrators. But then it starts to seem all too big to take on — it's the whole society that needs changing. But there are also reforms that can happen and we need them, too. We need to push for public review groups of parole boards — some kind of accountability from the institutions

to whom we hand over approximately one-half to one million people at any given time. We need subsidized legal aid for prisoners who rarely have the resources to contest their convictions or sentences. And we need to write to prisoners and to the keepers of prisoners.

Anyone who is interested in doing anything at all can write to the GCN prisoner project. We would also appreciate information such as Liesl provides about resources for prisoners in various states and names of people willing to be contacts for prisoners when they get out.

Readings of interest:

GCN's Lesbian Prisoner Supplement is free in any quantity. It includes articles from prisoners on relationships inside, health care, politics, use of drugs against prisoners and more. Just write and let us know how

many copies you want. If you know of any organization that might be willing to distribute copies or put them out for people to see, let us know.

Women in Prison, by Kathryn Watterson Burkhardt, Popular Library, NY 1976

Instead of Prisons, by Prison Research Education Action Project, Syracuse NY 1976. Write to the Project at 3049 E. Genesee St., Syracuse, NY 13224.

Kind and Unusual Punishment, by Jessica Mitford, Alfred Knopf, NY 1971.

— Stephanie Poggi

off your butts!

A message from a sister inside

By Liesl Hale

Please...I'm not into that much control, especially when some self-righteous, homophobic, egotistical and ignorant asshole is laying it down on me with a stick or whatever they feel like using against me to get me to comply. If we don't stand up, unite, and fight for ourselves we might as well hang it up because you can bank that nobody else will do it for us!

First a warning: Let everyone you contact know that you face very serious repercussions for what you are doing. Prison officials don't get as rowdy when they know they are under scrutiny from those who can make their bullshit known. This outside pressure can help insure that our rights to free speech and freedom of the press are not violated.

Second, don't get physical. The minute you raise your fists you beat yourself into submission — if they don't beat your head in before you get that far. If you get jacked up, go peacefully and stand silent. The goon squad and stun gun will always win, and they're doing this because you opened your mouth — they'd be more than happy to shut it for you.

Third, use intelligence, honesty and logical reasoning. If someone gets a little hot and bothered it's only because you hit a sensitive spot (ya, grab them by the balls), keep driving. Anger promotes action — you just have to direct it in a positive way.

Fourth, don't bitch and whine — just lay out the facts. Don't let your personal feelings override your point. Feelings are important, but feelings don't bring about change — acting on those feelings does. Save the life of your tear ducts, let the tears flow once you've won.

Most of all, don't quit! If they fuck with you, fuck back. Stand up and keep walking no matter how many times they lay you down. If you didn't feel strongly about this, you wouldn't have started up to begin with. Besides, the more they blow it, the more ammo you have. Remember, too, that the minute you start, you've got people watching every move you make. If you quit, or use your actions for personal gain, you will have served no purpose — not your own and surely no one else's.

Here are a couple of resources for Nevada inmates. I list only these two because they are in Carson City where our illustrious director lives, and where the state government is based. Also, Carson City houses three major prisons (NWCC, NNCC, and

NSP) so the people in this area tend to be more concerned about prison issues.

Nevada Appeal
P.O. Box 2288
Carson City, NV 89701

KPTL Radio (1300 AM)
1937 N. Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701

Also, contact out of state prisoners for information on what they are doing (be cool about letter content until you know what's up on the other end as they may have strategies we don't and vice-versa). Nevada prisoners are NOT allowed to make direct contact through the mail unless it's specifically authorized, although we are allowed to send and receive mail from other states. It's the old "Divide and Conquer" theory. But it doesn't stop us from hooking up with a few stand-up people at our individual prisons, so they really haven't accomplished much.

Remember that this is our problem — let's try to solve it. If we can't change everything, we can at least give them a hard enough time and force them to do something to clean up the shit or lose their jobs (notice I say clean up, not cover up.) If they say they're doing something, keep an eye on it — it may be just another "See, we try" lie. And as soon as we let up, everything goes right back to square one.

Hey, what are you still sitting there for? Grab a pen and paper and get busy! Better yet, hit the law library — if you have access to it — and banzai!!! What have you got to lose in comparison to what we can all gain?

In spirit,
Liesl Hale

P.S. I'm sorry this had to be sent without being typed. I'm still in the rack (isolation) and if my feelings are on target, I'm going to kill my sentence right where I'm at. Unless, by some miracle, the Warden gets a bug up her ass and ships me to Siberia or Alcatraz! (Ha, Ha!) I wish she would, obviously this place has some major problems. I wish I could transfer (no dice, I tried).

GCN, you are the best — I appreciate just knowing you hear us.

Be a penpal

I could also use a little emotional support — male or female, prisoner or free person. I will answer any who write.
Liesl Hale 23254
P.O. Box 7007/NWCC
Carson City, NV 89702

Letters to the prison

Any letters written to the Nevada Dept. of Prisons Director, George Sumner, concerning what Warden Burns is doing here, would be very helpful to me and every other woman in this prison that catches the brunt of her actions and decisions. She's a master at the games "Divide and Conquer" and "Cover Up," but she tends to relent and correct the problems when she is "called on the carpet" by Sumner and when outside people start asking questions. We desperately need outside voices to the Director concerning the games our warden plays.

Write:

George Sumner
Director Nevada Dept. of Prisons
Box 7000-NDOP Administration
Carson City, NV 89702

A message:

Butch,

I think I passed Rebel Training 101 — wish I could get a report card via the U.S. Postal Service. I miss you just as much as I did October 4, 1986. I will always love you for showing me myself by opening your heart to me. I didn't deserve you, how you saw the core I'll never know

— Kid

Self-help manual

"One of the reasons you are confined under such atrocious conditions is the failure of all of you (Hispanics, blacks, native Americans, whites, etc.) to set aside your petty jealousies and dislikes and your claims to machismo in order to form a united concrete legal organization which will have a say concerning the conditions under which you are incarcerated. Every person I knew while incarcerated hated those confining them. But, almost every prisoner of any ethnic group or gang hated each other even more. This prevented prisoners from organizing into a single united political force.

Until you can set aside the societal conditioning that keeps you from working together toward common ends, you can expect to remain confined under brutal and dehumanizing conditions.

You look to your pleasures while your brothers rot in these concrete and steel tombs — where you hide your mistakes.

D.F.M.
Washington, D.C.
Jul 1983

— from *Prisoners Self Help Manual*, Oceana Press, 75 Main St., Dabbs Ferry, NY 10522. This excellent resource for prisoner is very expensive — \$14 for a copy. It includes chapters on "Using this Manual and Using the Courts," "Legal Research," "Legal Writing," "Outline of the Legal System," "Overview of Prisoners' Rights," "Prison Life," and "Federal Post Conviction Remedies."



Roberta Achtenberg (R.) with her lover, Calif. Judge Mary Morgan and their son

Achtenberg

Continued from page 3
ference between the two and Burton has the name recognition factor in his favor," Morin said. He explained that Burton has "credibility" on almost every issue important to the district, including environmental protection, women's rights, abortion, the right to privacy, housing and AIDS. "In his ten years in the Assembly Burton gained a reputation for being able to move legislation ... that is why Willie Brown wants him there." In 1968 John Burton introduced consenting adult legislation aimed at decriminalizing gay and lesbian sexuality. Achtenberg faces several political obstacles if elected. She would have to con-

"[I am] proud to be a lesbian, but my candidacy is much more than that."

tend with a state legislature that is increasingly anti-gay. State Sen. John Doolittle has introduced ten separate anti-gay AIDS bills in the last year alone. The LaRouche initiative, which would give the state health department the power to quarantine people with AIDS, is gaining momentum. And as the AIDS toll mounts in Los Angeles and San Francisco, the need for more AIDS funding will rise. However, "freshmen" legislators are allowed funding for only four staff assistants, compared to fifteen for established leaders like Agnos. "My decision not to run was based in part on the fact that I felt I would not be able to adequately represent the needs of the district given this situation," said Norman. Morin added that one of the most important issues facing the state is for the Democrats to retain their slim four-seat majority. If the Republicans were to gain power, most observers agree that they would redistrict the San Francisco gay and lesbian community out of any hope of ever electing one of its own.

Norman and Morin also cited fundraising problems that may beset Achtenberg, who after two weeks has raised \$10,000. Burton will easily raise \$500,000, making progressive dollars scarce for Achtenberg, said Norman. "The money that we do have goes toward fighting LaRouche and the AIDS epidemic. The community is focused on these issues. It would be easier if John were seen as an enemy but if people feel they don't have to spend money they won't."

Siege

Continued from page 3

Senate floor to discharge the measure from the Committee on Third Reading. The vote was still far short of the necessary two-thirds majority; two senators stated they changed their vote against support for discharge following the Jan. 4 demonstration. Isaacson said that given the 1987 historic victory of winning both House and Senate majority support for the bill, she is confident that full victory is imminent.

Other gay rights supporters, including Scondras, are already strategizing about how to pass the bill this year. Civil disobedience participant McCray said, "Fifteen years has shown that a few controlled people

Still, Norman and Morin emphasized that the gay community, as well as Achtenberg, have nothing to lose. They said that by raising important issues, such as AIDS funding, the community could force Burton to deal with them directly. "I agree that it is our time to elect someone. It is up to us to find a way to do it. However, the 16th is not a great district to achieve that goal," said Morin.

Achtenberg said that she believes "going to the Assembly" is only one of the many ways to help the community. "I do not believe we should stop litigating and start organizing, I believe we should keep litigating and keep organizing. I think that by litigating in the courts we can win things that would have been lost in the political arena and vice versa," said Achtenberg. One of the problems with *Bowers v. Hardwick* (the Supreme Court decision upholding the Georgia sodomy law), according to Achtenberg, was that there was not enough political organizing accompanying the court process. For example, she said, the meaning of AB 1, the lesbian and gay rights bill introduced to the California Assembly by Agnos, is largely symbolic without the ongoing energy of the state's lesbian and gay community. AB 1 was passed last year by the California legislature but vetoed by Republican Gov. George Deukmejian.

"A lot of being a lawyer — you have to be licensed by the state, after all — is a crock of shit. I know that in the '60s I would have never dreamed of running for office. I would have been called a traitor. But then again I used to think a lot of things — that there would be a revolution — that turned out not to be. Electoral politics can play a clear pacifying or coopting function, but it can be politically productive work.

"It is not politically acceptable to be a hired gun or work for a corporation or work just for money. I think there is an important ideological function to be performed by being the first openly gay elected representative in the California legislature. But the movement will go on regardless. It is not as important as keeping a child in gay and lesbian custody.... It does mean something for the way a lot of people feel about being gay. Harvey Milk was a politician and a true revolutionary hero."

A Boston fundraiser for Achtenberg will be held in the spring. Anyone interested in helping to organize the event should contact Kevin Cathcart at Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, 426-1350. □

doing back room lobbying is not going to do it. We need to be out on the streets. People don't just hand over civil rights and liberation...the senators may say that protesters have no impact, but they can't help but respect people who have the nerve to put their bodies on the line to stand up for their rights."

"The whole world is watching"

GCN spoke with many lesbians and gay men involved in the Jan. 4 action. Those who were arrested and other protesters offered detailed accounts of the demonstration, with corroboration from everyone contacted that excessive violence had been used by some law enforcement officers. Several protesters expressed relief that many

Continued on page 12

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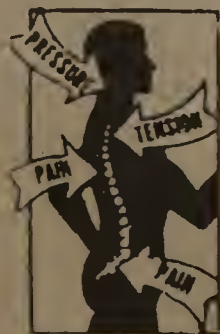
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Arts and obits

Continued from page 3

emplified this growth. There was an excit-
ment and an encouragement from both the
critics and the public for adventurous ex-
ploration in self-expression and artistic
creativity. Gay male artists were at the
forefront of many of these movements. Off-
Broadway and off-off-Broadway would
never have developed without the efforts
and visions of gay men. The same is true of
dance and many of the plastic arts as well as
music and performance work.

Peter Hujar started his career as a fashion
photographer and later turned to fine arts
pictures and portraits. Some of his earliest
pictures were of gay people in the arts:
Charles Ludlam, Divine, William Bur-
roughs. *Christopher Street* printed many of
the photos which were later collected, along
with the artist's other photos of Mexican
catacombs, in a volume entitled *Portraits in
Life and Death*. Susan Sontag wrote the in-
troduction to the book and praised the
photographer's vision and sensitivity to
both his subjects and his art. Hujar's photos
paved the way for the public acceptance of
such gay artists as Robert Mapplethorpe and
Arthur Tress.

Choo San Goh was the artistic director of
the prestigious Washington Ballet when he
died. His first work was presented by the
Dutch National Ballet for which he danced
in 1973. He created dances for ballet and
modern dance companies in Australia,
Hong Kong, Sweden, Chile and Israel. He
also produced works for the Theater Com-
pany of Harlem, the Alvin Ailey American
Dance Theater and the Boston Ballet. Goh
and several other choreographers changed
the aesthetic of ballet in the early '80s. By
combining idioms of modern dance and the
structures of classical ballet he created a new
look which was both streamlined and ac-
cessible to a wide audience. Born in
Singapore, Goh was influenced by the tradi-
tions of Asian dance as well, some of which
he combined in a modernized form with
traditional concepts of western ballet.

Gerald Chapman got his start directing
the Gay Sweatshop Theater in London (a
fact not mentioned in his New York *Times*
obit). He also worked in London's Royal
Court Theater as the director of the Young
Writer's Festival. He was then invited by
Stephen Sondheim to America to start a
similar project in New York. In 1983 Chap-
man and the Young Playwright's Festival of
New York both won a Drama Critics Circle
Award. In 1984-85 he worked at the
American Repertory Theater in Cambridge
developing scripts and directing the Monday
night series at the Hasting Pudding. Chap-
man always said his time at the Gay Sweat-
shop taught him how to work with actors in
a more sensitive manner. The exhilaration of
working with gay actors and breaking down
social taboos in dealing with gay content
was also creatively liberating for Chapman.

Barry Laine was one of the senior editors of
Stagebill magazine and a contributing editor
to *Dancemagazine*. But he will be
remembered most for helping establish The
Glines, New York's first gay theater and arts
center. Along with John Glines, Laine
helped produce a wealth of plays and
readings by gay writers — the most famous
of which were Harvey Firestein's *Torch
Song Trilogy* and William Hoffman's *As Is*.
Gay theater, as we know it today, is taken by
many audiences as given. Many do not real-
ize that in the early '70s it was Laine's and
other's work — the fundraising, the casting
calls, the backstage drudgery, and the
endless promotional work necessary to get
any press attention whatsoever — that made
gay theater a reality today.

Jerry Carlson was the principal conductor
of the Los Angeles Gay Men's Chorus be-
tween 1981 and 1987. He had lived in Los
Angeles since 1980 when he moved from
Chicago where he was a charter member of
the Chicago Gay Pride Band and co-found-
er of the Windy City Chorus. He was also
the co-founder of the Gay-Lesbian Associa-
tion of Choruses. While many other art
forms are limited in their audience appeal,
the rise in the number of gay and lesbian
choruses throughout the country has
posited an important move to musical
popularism: a community-centered cultural
expression which is immediately inspiring
and uplifting. It would be impossible to
separate Jerry Carlson, his music, and his
political work from the reality of an ever in-
creasing sense of gay community and gay ex-
pression today.

Looking over these names and these
achievements it is impossible for me not to

think of the many people who have died of
AIDS we have not read about, not heard
about, and who are mourned only by their
friends. For each of these artists there are
many more — stagehands, scene painters,
singers, dancers, actors, techworkers,
designers and gofers — we have lost. These
are the hidden deaths, but in a real sense
they matter even more. For although these
five men had the good luck to make names
for themselves, it was the hard work of these
countless others which allowed them to
reach the top. Every now and then there will
be a piece in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *New York
Magazine* or *Harper's* about the effect of
AIDS on the artistic community. All of the
usual names are called up — some of these
men will now be among them — but for the
most part these articles miss the point. They
are predicated on viewing the death of an
important artist from AIDS as a tragedy for
the arts world. That may be true. The more
sobering fact is that it is not just the death of
a Peter Hujar or a Gerald Chapman which
affects their artistic communities — it is the
death of anyone working in those communi-
ties. The cost in talent, expertise, energy and
morale is incalculable. We do not know
what that cost is now — living in the middle
of the battlefield — and may not know for
many years to come.

Writing this makes me realize how fright-
ened I am — not so much of AIDS and
death and all of the attending anxieties, but
frightened of what is going to become of gay
artists and gay culture in the next decade.
We are not only losing some of our best
talents — talents which came of age and
matured during a very special period of ar-
tistic history — but we are also forced to
create under a new and emotionally strain-
ing social and political environment in-
separable from the epidemic.

I don't think for one minute that gay
culture and gay sensibility are going to die
out because of AIDS — we are too adap-
table and innovative to ever allow that to
happen. But I am worried that because of
social, medical and emotional forces beyond
our control we will be forced to create in
self-defense, in reaction to the epidemic and
the conservative political backlash it has
unleashed, rather than finding inspiration
from our inner selves. I am also worried that
the foothold gay men and lesbians have
made in the arts — both in mainstream
popular culture and specifically gay en-
vironments — will be lost. It will either be
given up because we are too busy surviving
and mourning, or taken away because of ho-
mophobia and public censure.

But despite the terrors of writing and
reading obits, there is also the satisfaction,
however incomplete, that something is being
done. Someone's life has been noted. Some
attention is being paid. Someone else may
read and understand a little more of how
large, how inclusive and diverse the gay
world is. Most importantly, though, it is the
very act of doing something, anything, in
the face of AIDS that matters.

And in taking such action — as well in
remembering and mourning which are part
of each obituary — the pieces ease both the
terror and the pity, and they become
political inseparable from the personal. □



Capitol police without badges stand ready to defend the Senate chambers from "near-rioting" queers



Gay activist Robert Wheatly being forcibly removed from the Mass. Senate gallery after demanding action on the gay rights bill, Jan. 4.

Siege

Continued from page 10

newscameras were present since they felt State House court officers were "throwing people around" very carelessly and it would have been worse without media witnesses.

Some also expressed anger that officials had closed one of the Senate viewing galleries, an atypical occurrence likely undertaken in anticipation of the protest. Consequently, the one remaining gallery was full and court officers forced protesters to wait in line outside, which delayed the start of the civil disobedience. When it did begin in the gallery at about 5:00 p.m., many supporters had arrived to demonstrate both inside and outside the State House.

Bob Wheatly, a gay activist and Unitarian minister, initiated the action by standing and interrupting Sen. David Locke who was speaking about an auto insurance bill. Wheatly shouted, "I object to what you're doing! Where's the gay rights bill?" As court officers rushed to forcefully remove him, other protesters popped up in turn from throughout the gallery and presented loud, angry statements. Wheatly was dragged with alleged roughness from the gallery, sparking noisy cheers and chanting from hordes of supporters packing the corridors. McCray, who was carried out shortly thereafter, said that hearing the commotion was a "magnificent and fantastic" experience that made her feel powerful and somewhat safer during her arrest.

Inside, senators stopped their actions while other protesters were removed by officers. Activist French Wall reported receiving a bloody lip in the process, while protester John Hernandez was seen being punched in the face and grabbed around the neck. Specific violent acts against protesters that were seen by many witnesses include the stomping on Ray Drew as he was lying on the floor, and the pushing of David Brillhart down several steps that resulted in a bruised ankle. At least seven protesters sought medical assistance for their injuries. Other protesters reported verbal harassment. For example, activist Joseph Perrson said he was called "fucking scum fag" by a court officer.

Capitol Police and State House officers

refused to respond to questions from *GCN* either during or after the protest. The Boston Globe reported that Senate Chief Court Officer George Danielson said he did not think excessive force had been used by his staff. According to activist Carl Mann, Danielson was repeatedly verbally abusive to protesters. Mann also said that on the day after the demonstration, Danielson arbitrarily refused to let gay men and lesbians into the Senate viewing gallery, which is supposed to be public space open to all people.

One episode that infuriated protesters occurred when court officers brought in bolt cutters to remove handcuffs from those doing civil disobedience. Allegedly, an officer made a mock clipping motion as if to cut the neck of a protester. Reportedly, Sen. Bulger and other senators who saw the motion laughed and applauded the officer.

After the protest, some lesbian/gay rights activists and supporters expressed satisfaction at the magnitude and impact of the demonstration, as well as their determination to pursue legal action against law enforcement officers. Explained Wall, "We exposed specific injustices against gay men and lesbians. We want to make it politically damaging for senators, who watched all the violence, to do nothing about it. Our purpose was to draw attention to the fact that gay and lesbian rights aren't happening."

Wall, who claimed he was banged around roughly and called "faggot this and faggot that" during his arrest, said, "It was very gratifying to be inside the gallery and hear the crowd demonstrating outside. It felt like the State House was under siege." □

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PUBLICATIONS

BLACK/OUT

The new quarterly magazine from the National coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, features news, views, reviews, poetry, short fiction and announcements of interest to the national Black Lesbian and Gay community. Sample copy, \$4, 1 yr. subscription, (4 issues) \$10. To: Black/Out, NCBLG, P.O. Box 2490, Washington, DC 20013. (ex)

LESBIAN CONTRADICTION

A Journal of Irreverent Feminism. Quarterly of commentary, analysis, reviews, cartoons & humor by and for women who agree to disagree—who are still political, but not necessarily correct. Sample \$1; sub \$5; more if/less if. LesCon, 584 Castro, -263G, SF, CA 94114. (V15.21)

GUARDIAN:Independent radical newsweekly. Covers Gay, women and minority struggles and international progressive movements. Special offer—4 issues FREE. Write Guardian, Dept GCN, 33W 17th St. NY, NY 10011. (ex)

PUBLICATIONS

off our backs

Celebrating 15 years of radical feminist journalism. We bring feminist national/international news analysis and reviews each month. \$11 year, 11 issues. (\$15 for contributing subs) \$20 institutional fee. Sample-\$3 for 3 issues! Write 'off our backs' Dept GCN, 1841 Columbia Rd. NW, Room 212 Washington, DC 20009. (ex)

OUTRAGEOUS WOMEN

National journal of woman-to-woman S/M. Diverse feminist quarterly of S/M fact, fiction and photos. \$11/yr. Single issues \$3. Must state you are over 18. SASE for info. PO Box 23, Somerville MA 02143. (ex)

WOMAN OF POWER: "A Magazine of Feminism, Spirituality, and Politics," an inspiring international quarterly publication. Subscriptions \$22 for 4 issues; singles issues \$6 plus \$1 postage. P.O. Box 827, Cambridge, MA 02238, telephone (617) 625-7885. (ex)

ON OUR BACKS, the sexual entertainment magazine for lesbians, is 48 pages of erotic fiction, features, plus timely sexual advice and news columns. We are quarterly, national, unique and provocative. \$15/yr sub or \$5 current issue to: On Our Backs, PO Box 421916, San Francisco, CA 94142. (ex)

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ORGANIZATIONS

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JEWISH LESBIAN DAUGHTERS OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

We meet for support & networking and welcome contact from other *Jewish Lesbian Daughters of Holocaust Survivors*. The next meeting is scheduled for April 22nd-24th, in upstate New Hampshire, and semi-annually thereafter. A *partners group* has also been formed for lesbian women who are in relationship with JLDHS. Membership is not dependent on both partners. For information, write Box 6194, Boston, MA 02114 or call (617) 321-4254. (15.49)

OLDER LESBIAN ENERGY

Social and support group for women over 40. P.O. Box 1214, East Arlington, MA 02174. (15.48)

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS

Support organization for lesbians, 1151 Mass Ave, Camb. OCBC. Raps every Tues, Thurs at 8pm. Special raps for 35+, parents, ynger women, baby boomers, singles, coming out, issues forum. All 8pm. Monthly events, outing club, library. Info: 661-3633. All women invited to participate. (15.35)

BLACK AND WHITE MEN TOGETHER

Multiracial group for all people. Call (415) 431-1976 or write BWMT, suite 140, 580 Castro St. SF, CA, 94114. (16.1)

BOSTON ALLIANCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH

Social support group for youth 22 and under. Wed. night general meeting from 7:30-9pm. New persons meeting at 6:00. Women's meeting at 6:45. Call 482-7858 for info. (15.32)

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GAY PRINCETON ALUMNI

The Fund for Reunion is an organization devoted to improving campus life, strengthening alumni ties, and encouraging gay and lesbian studies. Get involved! Contact The Fund, Post Office Box 1481, Princeton, New Jersey 08542. (25)

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Alexander Berkman, — Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist

AIDS info

If you want some basic info on AIDS, please write the GCN Prisoner Project, 62 Berkeley, Boston, MA 2116.

Prisoners with AIDS

We have a little (!) legal help and are looking for info from you on your treatment (or non-treatment!). Please send a description of what's happening at your joint, even if you have just tested HIV positive and show no symptoms. Our legal help will NOT be able to take on all cases, of course, but he is looking for some situations that could be taken to court and have a chance of winning. If you want to help us out with your story, please send it to GCN Prisoner Project, 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

Kinky? Think about Sex a lot? Fantasies turn you on? If so we have something in common! I'm also interested in legal rights issues, collecting postcards, and correspondence with people of all walks of life. Size, looks and color have no importance. If you'd like to get to know me, write: Tom BUTLER, 389367, Rt 2 Box 20, Midway TX 75852.

I'm a gay published poet/writer in prison. I'd like to get in contact with poets and writers on the outside, hoping that the resulting feedback and communication will improve the quality of my work. I'll answer all letters. Vernon MAULSBY, Y-4429, Box 244, Graterford PA 19426.

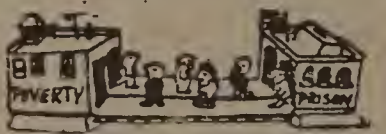
I'm looking for a friend in the Pittsburgh area for friendship. I love to write and you're welcome to visit. Please drop a line. Kevin ALEXANDER, J-0695, Box 99901, Pittsburgh, PA 15233.

I he man of my dreams would be tall and strong and he would have nine fat inches or more to give me often in all possible ways. Meanwhile (smile) I seek a man for a very deep and lasting relationship to help carry me through these hard times. Let's get acquainted. Jerome BERRY, 44838, Box 900, Jefferson City MO 65102

I'm a Cuban American looking for someone to start a long friendship with. It makes no difference if you're in prison or not. I'm lonely and want someone who will care. Please write to TaRay Tryllo "MONROE", C-31485 (5-141), Box 4000, Vacaville CA 95696.

6 inches cut very thick and hot hard throbbing flesh quivering balls large doll eyes long lashes no body hair ... will answer all. No head games. Send SASE for reply. Matthew MILLER, 198480, Box 740, London OH 43140. If there are any feminine sexy gorgeous DRAG QUEENS out there, please write me!! Thanks for sending your GCN paper too! Arthur JACKSON, 192799, Box 57, Marion OH 43302.

I would like to hear from someone who'd like to write a prisoner. I'm writing something on the prison system here in Virginia for your paper. Thanks for your help. Abraham TIMBERLAKE, 151839 (MBC-15), State Farm VA 23160.



BOOK freak adores a nicely turned phrase. Whatever you're into in your gay/lesbian or just outre' scheme of things, if you're into it passionately, share it with me. I'll reply thoughtfully. Stamps are a must, as I reply weightily. My files bulge with writings and clippings on individual rights and freedom of the press issues. Edward G. EVANS, C-41476, PO Box 8101 (No.2144), San Luis Obispo CA 93409.

Tall, Black, Handsome, Well hung man looking for a very serious relationship. TV/TS and all Queens that want a loving man, please write. Julius EVANS, 453368, Box 16, Lovelady TX 75851.



DENNIS MORRIS! Please contact Sonya Clark. She doesn't have your correct return address. Sonya Clark, 17400, 1479 Collins Ave, Marysville, OH 43040.

Blond hair, blue-eyed Scorpio likes rock and roll, sports, walks in the rain and romantic individuals. Honest, sincere and open-minded. Seeks same for friendship. Debbie McHAFFIE, W25954, Box 1800-D41003A, Norco CA 91760

I am a dyke (butch) seeking lesbians to correspond with. I welcome all ages, races, etc. (I have a special 'lust' for teenage lesbians.) I'm a Virgo, tattooed, and lonely. Come on ladies, write me. I have lots of attention to share. Judy WALLACE, 03431-030, 3301 Leestown Rd, Lexington KY 40511.

I have been a lesbian all my life and I'm looking for someone to write. Here's my ad: Have you ever seen rain through bars of steel? Have you ever seen life so close and so real? Like this the rain you could not touch, even though you wanted to so very much; as much as the love you need. Please write, Gloria GRIFFIN, 328979-140, PO Box 8540, Pembroke Pines FL 33024.

FREE TO WOMEN IN PRISON!
Womanews, PO Box 220, New York, NY 10014.

My hobbies are writing, poetry, cooking, designing jewelry, making love, and traveling. I like cheerful people, cuddling, making people happy, eating good food, and blues and rock 'n roll. I dislike prison, peas, disco, crowds, and loud people. I'd like to be penpals with someone. Charles KILLINGSWORTH, Box 97, 124596, McAlester OK 74501.

I'm lonely and goodlooking and enjoy reading, writing, sex, meeting new people. I need a penpal to write. Johnny McMUNN, 139073, Box 900, Jefferson City MO 65102.

Very lonely male looking for 'serious' (meaning more than a few letters) friendship with people either inside or out. I enjoy fantasy letters. Ronald POST, 183-812, Box 45699, Lucasville OH 45699.

I'd like to be put on your penpal list. Also I would like to have the addresses of CHURCHES in Ohio (MCCs, Dignity, etc). Eddie FERGUSON, 159-598, Box 45699, Lucasville OH 45699.

Warm, sensitive and humorous gay Black male, 34, would like friendship and whatever else comes. Mark D. WILLIAMS, 184-469, Box 45699, Lucasville OH 45699.

Black male body builder and former nude model seeks sexy bottom gay male or TV-TS. Age no matter. Wish to share friendship. Explicit letters and photos get quickest reply. Rick DuBOSE, 186-915, Box 5500, Chillicothe OH 45601

Looking for a true friend where beauty comes from—the inner being, not looking for an outer shell beauty only. I'm not into drugs, am vegetarian, from Houston, and alone here in Oklahoma. Please write, Al WALL, 91424, Rt 1 Box 548, Lexington OK 73051.

Black gay prisoner, 31, in the hole in Cal. would like to correspond with gays on the street and in prison. Emmette MITCHELL, C-22649 (P-320), Box 2000, Vacaville CA 95696

Healthy young black bi-male would like to correspond with other bi-males and gays of all races and ages. I never did much associating but now wish to start. I need friends awful bad and would like to reach those on the outside. Earl BATTLES, P-7516, Drawer K, S-I R.H.U., Dallas PA 18612.



I'm a TV, very sweet, effeminate and open-minded. I will welcome all letters. 'Pamela'. Paul LUSTER, 153862, 4-D-24, 1012 W. Columbia, Farmington MO 63640

I am a very loveable person that would like to write other gay people. I'm a bi-transsexual. I go both ways or you can just call me a freak. I'm 17, Puerto Rican, and would like to hear from you freaky people out there. So please write. By the way they call me Tanya, but put my real name on the envelope. Troy RIVERA, 84B-0653, Box 367-B main, Dannemora NY 12929

I am 43, somewhat educated, enjoy good food, books and music. I seek to communicate with someone sympathetic. I hope there is someone who can understand my plight. Richard HOCHMAN, 60953, Lock Bag R, Rahway NJ 07065.

I've been gay all my life and am looking for someone to write. It seems it has made it hard for my mother to find someone who'll write me in prison. Gene CLARK, Cell 10 E block, Box 137, Tillery NC 27887.

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94 GREEN STREET JAMAICA PLAIN, MA 02130

calendar

9 SATURDAY TO
19 TUESDAY

19 Tuesday □ This man needs a few good queers. Mass. Governor Mike "the Duke" Dukakis continues to run for President, despite no demonstrated understanding of safe sex education. Volunteer to educate the Duke at his State of the State address. (Previous plans to meet at Campaign Headquarters are cancelled.) Meet at 6pm behind the state House. Organized by the "Duke and AIDS" committee of MASS ACT-OUT. Info: 661-7737.

9 Saturday

Allston □ **Electra Festival** (See other listing) with Netta Plotsky of Israel in **Life Among Forms** and Jolanta Krukowska of Poland in **A Dance About...** Double Edge Theater, 5 St. Luke's Rd. 8pm. Info: 254-4228.

Northampton □ **"Telling our Lesbian Stories"** with Jay Goldspinner, lesbian teller of tales, at the New Alexandria Library. From 4-6pm, oral herstory workshops on storytelling techniques; 6-7pm potluck; 7-9pm, performance of "We are Everywhere!" by Jay and others who want to tell stories of lesbian life. Stories will be taped for the library's oral herstory collection. Place and other info: (413) 584-7616.

Allston □ **"Opening the heart for people with AIDS, Arc, their loved ones and care givers."** Bay Cove Adolescent Center, 1168 Comm. Ave. Wheelchair accessible. 10am-6pm. Suggested donation: \$65. To register call, 864-9181.

Jamaica Plain □ **The Lunch**, a new play by Michelle Gabow, directed by Kristina Johnson — a difficult, humorous and loving dialogue between a Jewish mother and daughter at Eliot Hall, 7 Eliot St. (Also 1/10, 15-17, 22-24) 8pm. Info: 522 7377.

Boston □ **Girth and Mirth of New England** sponsors Boys' Night Out at Big-Time Wrestling. For details, call Joe, 926-5827 or Lenny, 389-5635.

Boston □ **Cindy Sherman** exhibition of feminist, post-modern photography. (Through 1/17.) At the Institute of Contemporary Art, 955 Boylston. \$3.50 general admission. Call for hours and more info: 266-5152.



15 Friday □ Janice Perry, a.k.a. Gal.

Boston □ **Women in the Building Trades** Program free introductory workshop. Roxbury Community College, Rm. 312, 625 Huntington Ave. 10-noon. To pre-register or for more information call Priscilla Golding or Connie Nelson at 734-1960 x245. (Free workshop also offered 1/12, 6-8pm.)

10 Sunday

Allston □ **Electra Festival** (see Jan. 9) with Alakananda Samarth of India in **Kunti** and **Human Voice**. Double Edge Theater. Info: 254-4228.

Brookline □ Brookline, Brighton, Allston **lesbian potluck** dinner. 5:30 pm. Info: 731-8579.

Boston □ **David Scondras** on "Boston's Other Voice," WROR, 98.5 FM. 12:30am. (Monday morning).

Cambridge □ **Men of All Colors Together** discuss James Bladwin and Bayard Rustin at Harvard Yard's Phillips Brook House. 1-5pm. Refreshments served.

Cambridge □ **Rock against Sexism** disc party at ManRay, 21 Brookline St. 6-9pm. \$2-3 donation.

11 Monday

Cambridge □ **Lesbian rap** on "The Women's Community and What the Women's Center Means to Us," at eh Women's Center, 46 Pleasant. 8-10pm. Info: 354-8807.

Allston □ **Electra Festival workshops** (see Jan. 9) with Geddy Aniksdal of Norway and Anna Lica of Denmark. 7-10pm. (Also Jan. 12) \$60 advance registration required. Info: 254-4228.

Boston □ Annual meeting and election of **Greater Boston Lesbian and Gay Political alliance**. Boston City Hall, Piemonte Rm., 5th fl, use Congress St. entrance. 7pm.

13 Wednesday

Cambridge □ **Lesbian Al-Anon** at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 6:30-8pm (with childcare). Info: 354-8807.

Boston □ **NAMES Project**/New England Chapter meeting for people who want to help bring the AIDS quilt to Boston or create new panels. City Hall, Piemonte Room, 5th floor. (Use Congress St. entrance) 7-9pm. Info: 323-9747.

Cambridge □ **Science for the People** magazine planning and evaluation meeting. Science for the People offices, 897 Main St. 7:30pm.

Cambridge □ A discussion of the new political magazine **Z** with co-editor Lydia Sargent and a contributing columnist. "Say it, Sister!" WMBR 88.1 FM 7-8pm. Info: 494-8810.

14 Thursday

Boston □ **GCN's production night**. All welcome. Proofreading: before 8PM. Paste-up: after 7PM. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington & Back Bay T-stops. GCN: 426-4469.

15 Friday

Boston □ **GCN mailing**. Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5pm to 10pm. Near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 426-4469.

Allston □ **Electra Festival** of international experimental performance by women features Anna Lica of Denmark in **Madame Bovary...downtown** and Geddy Aniksdal of Norway in **The Stars Are No Nearer**. Double Edge Theatre, 5 St. Luke's Rd. 8pm. \$12. Performances continue through Jan. 24. Info: 254-4228.

Cambridge □ Running Arts and Femme Core present Girls Perform: Women on Stage with **Janice Perry**, a.k.a. Gal, an insane one-woman cabaret of comedy, music, theatre and satire. The Brattle Theatre, 40 Brattle St. 10pm. \$7. (Note: Lucille Ball in a movie co-feature **The Fuller Brush Girl** shows at 6 and 8pm. \$10 for both Perry and Lucille.) Info: 876-6837.

Boston □ **"Barriers to Dialogue: Faith and Politics"** with Judith Beckett, Hayat, Chris Laughlin, Cheng Imm Tan and Pamela Wax. Sponsored by Women's Theological Center and Women of Colors Unified. 250 Stuart St. 7pm.

Boston □ **Financial Risk-Reduction workshop** sponsored by the AIDS Action Committee, 661 Boylston St. 7pm. \$10. Info: 437-6200.

Boston □ **City of Boston tribute to Martin Luther King** and the 350th year of Black presence in Boston. Boston Park Plaza Imperial Ballroom with guest appearance by Donna Summer. Performances by Cab Calloway and Co. with Chris Calloway and The Rhythm Queens. 8:30-10:30pm. \$25. Info: 427-4741.

Boston □ **"AIDS and Psychotherapy: Clinical Dilemmas for gay therapists and gay clients"** with Steve Cadwell. Sponsored by AIDS Action for all mental health professionals, 74 Fenwood Rd. 7-8:30pm. Info: Jay, 735-4613 days.

16 Saturday

Boston □ **"Coping with the Concerns and Problems of Older Gay Men."** Monthly meeting of Prime Timers, Revere Rm. Lindemann Health Ctr., 25 Staniford St. All older gay men invited. 2-4pm. Info: write Box 352, Reading, MA 01867.

Northampton □ **Shelix, lesbian S/M support group** discussion of "Physical and Sexual Safety in Lesbian S/M." A presentation by Bet Power. New women welcome. Call (413) 584-7616 for location or send SASE to Shelix, Box 416, Florence Station, Northampton, MA 01060.

19 Tuesday

Boston □ **Confront the Duke at the State House!** Due to the State of the State Address, the Action originally planned for 4:45pm at 43 Chauncy St. (Duke's Prez Campaign H.Q.) will now be held at the State House. Meet behind the State House at 6:00pm. Organized by the "Duke and AIDS" Committee of MASS ACT OUT. Info: 661-7737.

CALENDAR COMPILED BY
STEPHANIE POGGI

Photographs by Cindy Sherman. At the Institute of Contemporary Art, 955 Boylston St. Through January 17.

By Ann Steuernagel

A stunning survey exhibit of the work of artist/photographer Cindy Sherman reveals, examines and pokes fun at the images of women presented by popular culture. From the late '70s to the present, Sherman's art has progressed from the seemingly tame and vaguely familiar to the bizarre and disgusting.

Her early black and white movie stills present sultry poses that look like scenes from '50s and '60s films — from sultry Kim Novak poses to Mary Tyler Moores. White pearls, bouffant hair-dos and melodramatic glares at someone beyond the frame. I found myself recalling the films from which these photos had been taken — Hitchcock's *The Birds*, Goddard's *One or Two Things I Know About Her*. But no, all the women are Cindy Sherman; all her photos are of herself — from the housewife with support hose and apron to the sex goddess with her arched back and lace panties. A smirk becomes a pout — trade the black bra for a head band and she's an adolescent girl in a Truffaut film. Cindy is not only the artist and subject, but also the lighting tech and make-up artist.

Sherman's enormous color photo shots (2'x 4'), beginning in 1981, take us away from the movies to women trapped, constrained within the box/boundary of the frame. The subject as well as the viewer is well aware of these tight spaces — a girlish Cindy in gingham dress crouches on the floor, her head bumping the upper part of the frame like an Alice in Wonderland. She's too big for the space she occupies, but the only means of escape is to shrink. All these giants in boxes wear fearful, forlorn expressions. Some are more androgynous than others, all contemplate their confinement.

A series that follows consists of fashion photos or costume dramas — an array of personalities more like figures at a costume ball than their movie still predecessors.

To all the Shermans

Cindy Sherman's photos/art of herself take a long look at the surface and underside of women's roles



Untitled Film Still No. 7, 1978, black and white photograph

These prepare the viewer for the more disturbing late show fantasy creatures where traces of violence mark the face of a skin-diver washed up on the beach, the pig-nosed woman face down in the dirt or the genie with his/her wooden smile and breasts. As Sherman says in the *Heroic Figure* exhibition catalogue, "[N]ow trying to overcome the natural desire to hide truly hideous examples, I learn to completely objectify the possibilities of what one's body can do or look like."

The most disturbing *and* humorous of the large color photos are those Sherman produced most recently. They offer only remnants of the human image. Pop-tarts, ho-hos and vomit on the beach draw those who aren't repelled to the distressed reflection of a woman seen in a pair of sunglasses. In another, suggestive of the results of nuclear war, a business suit, computer and compact adorn the ashes of what one supposes was once a successful yuppie.

Sherman may seem to be merely calling our attention to the absurd costumes, the melodrama and fantasy made spectacular through her use of color, lighting and props. But beyond this fascination with personas comes the suggestion that all images of women are clichés. Cindy can be — she is — all of these people. Anyone could be any persona with the proper lighting and make-up — the persona is, in the end, just that. As Lisa Phillips notes in an article in the current Sherman catalogue, "By using herself as a model to replicate other models, she takes control of her own image in active revolt against the roles she is expected to play." Sherman's strange and often horrifying types strike back at the norms of womanhood, of beauty.

With just a week left at the Institute of Contemporary Art, feminists interested in current art and anyone interested in the power of popular culture should run down and get a look at Cindy Sherman — whoever she is.

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